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BRITISH UNIMA

BRITISH UNIMA CENTRE BULLETIN

EDITOR – ROBERT FOWLER

MARCH 2000 103

Editorial

Nature may abhor a vacuum, but better nothing in an editorial than vacuous words. In brief, then, this is my penultimate *Bulletin*. It is not quite as "planned," but, thanks to a few members, it is here, and I feel confident already that there will be no problem with the next *Bulletin*, in July. What will then ensue, of course, is another matter, given that no one has volunteered to take on the editorship. Honestly, it is not that formidable. And it is still not too late!

Ex-Ex Cathedra Remarks

Ray DaSilva

Just a few tidyings-up before I quit this post. Following the recent election your new committee is as follows: Chris Abbott, Meg Amsden, Cariad Astles, Glyn Edwards, Robert Fowler, Penny Francis, Helen Fry, Anna Ingleby, Loretta Howells, Martin MacGilp, Lorraine von Gehlen, and Trevor Wayland (coopted). Your new chair is Meg Amsden. I have known Meg for a long time, we were both involved in the early Puppeteers East days. It is comforting to be able to retire, confident that the position passes into a safe pair of hands.

I would like to record here my thanks to the previous committee for their support and also to those members who have done voluntary jobs for the organization, in particular everyone who has supplied information and written articles for the *Bulletin* and *Newsletter*. You are already well aware that the 1 July *Bulletin* will be Robert's last. I have had a preview of material already submitted for the July issue, but there is still room for more, and your contributions will, as always, be welcome.

The membership survey produced quite a number of ideas, which the committee will study carefully. As the membership survey form was coupled with the subscription, I think it follows that those who have not yet paid their 2000 sub (and there are some) have not responded to the survey. Therefore, with the final reminders is another copy of the questionnaire. It is not obligatory, but we do want to hear from you in order to discover how the needs of the puppetry community are changing. It is always, inevitably, a bit of a balancing act to cater for the diverse tastes of our membership, but I would like to think that we have done reasonably well over the last few years. One great frustration however, has been the lack of support and communication from UNIMA headquarters in Charleville. I am assured that these problems will change after the UNIMA World Festival of Puppet Theatre and Congress, Magdeburg, 24 June-2 July 2000. Let's hope so. The organizers of the festival have certainly been busy, please see the festival newsletter, which is enclosed in the *Bulletin* of all members who did not receive it by hand at the AGM in Bristol. We are trying to discover whether it might be useful to hire a minibus to take members to Magdeburg. Would anyone interested please contact Penny Francis:

86 Bromfelde Rd, London SW4 6PR; 0171 622 5058; pennyf@netcomuk.co.uk

Back home, you will also be aware of the round-table meetings which have taken place among the national puppetry organizations. All decisions made by the representatives at the joint meetings have to be ratified by the committees of the individual organizations. Your committee has formally ratified the following:

1. The formation of a Consortium to be called Puppeteers UK.
2. The address for the time being to be care of the Puppet Centre in London.
3. The setting up of a joint bank account.

The last helps to facilitate grant applications to be made on behalf of the Consortium.

There is some information in this issue about the recent sale of the Henson Organization. The lack of interest by contributors to Puptcrit, the puppeteers' chatline, was very surprising. I saw only one positive comment. The generosity of Jim Henson to many puppeteers and puppet centres worldwide is well known, but a lot is unrecorded. When we were building Norwich Puppet Theatre, we were very surprised and grateful to receive, quite out of the blue, ie without having applied for it, a donation of £1,000 towards the cost from Jim. All the emotions we felt cannot be described. Somebody who really understood, cared.

Cartoon by Rogers from The Pittsburg Post Gazette

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Not Chary of Chairing

Meg Amsden

The Puppet Place and South West Puppeteers put on an excellent day of varied activities (*Puppet Slam!*) to enliven the UNIMA AGM in Bristol on Saturday 19 February.

The programme of entertainment began well with a performance of *The Changeling of Brea Vean* by Theatre of Fruit, with lots of silly jokes, inventive staging, and quick repartee between the two performers.

After lunch, at the AGM, Henryk Jurkowski, former International President of UNIMA, told the meeting how UNIMA had begun as an association of friends. He strongly encouraged members to attend UNIMA 2000 in Magdeburg (24 June - 2 July), or to contact Claire Voisard with subjects for discussion. This would be our opportunity to affect the way that UNIMA will be run for the next four years. It was suggested that our survey of members would provide useful material. Penny Francis asked anyone who might be interested in making up a party to travel to Magdeburg by minibus to contact her. Concerns were voiced over the

future of the *Bulletin*, as no one has offered yet to take the place of the current editor, and time is getting short.

Ray DaSilva announced that the John Phillips Memorial Lecture would be given by John Furse on "The Grotesque, the Sublime, and the 'Ridiculous' Art of James Ensor," which would very likely be given at the *visions* festival in October (more information in the next *Bulletin*). He reminded members that they were eligible to apply to UNIMA for bursaries to attend festivals abroad. The new *Répertoire International* (address list) would be available after Magdeburg.

Peter Charlton announced that the Guild would celebrate its 75th anniversary at the London Puppet Centre on 25 April with an evening of toy theatre (George Speaight, Peter Baldwin, and Peter Peasgood). Paul Fordham (Performing Arts Development officer, Gloucester City Council) enlisted the support of British UNIMA for the Simmonds Puppet Project, of which he is coordinator, which is concerned with recreating one of the early programmes of the marionettist William Simmonds.

At the end of the AGM Ray DaSilva presented for my safekeeping a Belgian rod marionette of Charlemagne (given to UNIMA during the 1998 Belgian trip), and declared that this was my "chain of office" on being elected the new chair of British UNIMA. I proposed a vote of thanks to Ray for all his hard work over the last four years.

At a brief Committee meeting before the AGM I admitted to being an impostor, having only served on the committee for a year, and having only a fairly hazy idea of the Byzantine goings-on in Charleville. I said I had much to learn from the committee and was not too proud to ask questions, but it must not be assumed therefore that I had no ideas of my own. I reminded the committee that BrUNIMA is a small organization. It was all very well having grandiose ideas about what we ought to be doing, but ideas were worth little unless acted upon. If you have a good idea you should be prepared to follow it through and be involved in carrying it out. I said I liked to work in a team. People on the committee have many skills and strengths, and I was looking forward to working with them to achieve what the membership expected of us. I declared war on bureaucratic jargon (we are not, after all. a wing of international government!) and asked the committee to use plain English that we could all understand.

After the AGM the day continued with a full and lively programme of brief shows, talks, announcements, and extracts of a work in progress by the South West Puppeteers and associates (Parachute Theatre Co, with Dangerous Dave; Full Beam Theatre Co; Squeaky Knees; Theatre of Fruit; and Jane Paterson, who talked about the shadow puppets of India, focusing on Kerala).

Many thanks to Kate Pollard and SW Puppeteers for entertaining and hosting us so well.

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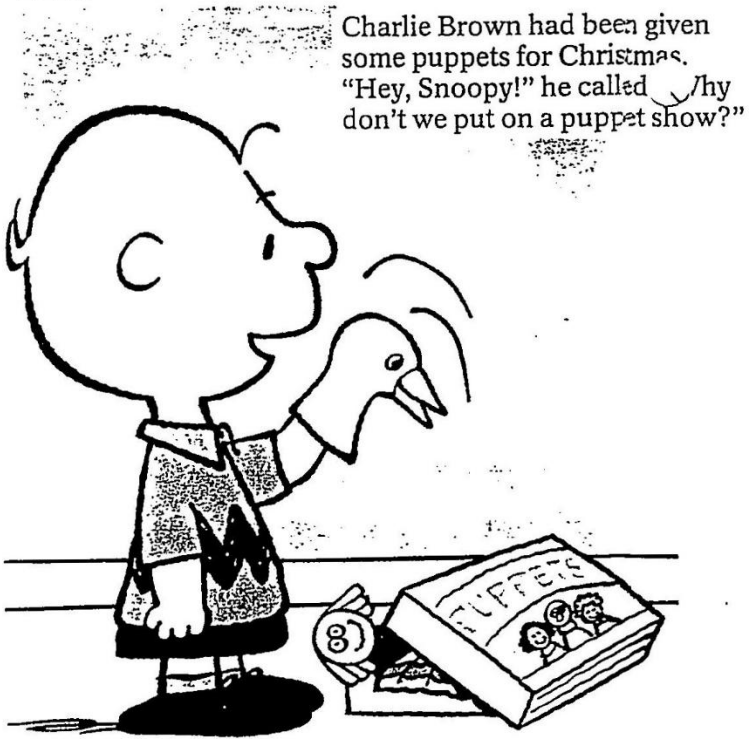
Everyone will be aware that Charles Schulz died 12 February, the day before his final Peanuts cartoon was due to appear. We thought you might like to see an example of a "pawpet" show. See *Snoopy on Stage*, 1974, and *Snoopy Pantomime Puppets*, 1991.



The following account of a recent trip to Bali by Stephanie Green includes a meeting with and description of a performance by I Wayan Wija, a famous *dalang*, who performs traditional *wayang kulit*, for which he has won many prestigious prizes in Indonesia, but who has also collaborated with Larry Reed in California using giant modern shadow figures. An article by Stephanie on *topeng* mask dance will appear in the next issue.

Wayang Kulit In Bali

Stephanie Green

Bali is rightly known as the Island of Dance. However, although it is hardly promoted and is almost invisible to the average tourist, I knew that *wayang kulit* was a popular art form for the local people and hoped very much to see an "authentic" performance. Thanks to recommendations and personal introductions, I met the brilliant and popular *dalang* I Wayan Wija and was invited to attend one of his performances. But first my husband and I thought it no harm to watch a "tourist" version too, if only to make comparisons. Also, we thought a shortened version (the actual performance proved to be 45 minutes long plus a 15-minute introductory talk) would be no bad thing as an introduction to our son, aged nine.

Amid the plethora of nightly dance performances, we found only one performance of *wayang kulit* on offer to tourists, at weekends only, at Oka Kartini in Ubud. Rows of about 50 chairs were laid out and coffee (Indonesian) was offered. The audience was only about 20 strong (mainly Dutch, Germans, and Australians). The lights came on and a gentleman stood in front of the screen and welcomed us, explaining the nature of shadow puppetry, the materials, and the sources (the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabarata*), and handed out printed sheets with a résumé of the plot of the excerpt to be performed that night – about the hero Bima and one of the many fights between the good characters and demons.

So far so good. It was all very charming and welcoming. But oh dear, the performance! All I can say is that, knowing

Servant figure Twalèn
drawn by I Pasek Wayan Riyeh

few tourists speak Bahasa Indonesia and that fewer still (even among the Balinese) speak the sacred, ancient Kawi that the high-born characters chant, they had decided to appeal to the lowest common denominator: a violent free-for-all, where as much bashing and battering between heroes and demons as possible went on. The character Twalèn (peculiar to Bali and very popular as he stands for the common man taking on authority), with his pot-belly and ridiculous sprout of hair that sticks out at the top of his head, should have added humour. Unfortunately, despite his coarse voice and laugh, he left us cold.

Despite the magic of the flickering shadows, and the wonderful *gender* music throughout [the *gender* is a metallophone with a two-octave or more range with bronze keys suspended over a bamboo resonator], somehow this was a tasteless, unimaginative experience, and we left depressed. So what are the problems? Too much commercialization in Bali or is it the nature of the traditional repertoire of the *wayang*

kulit to be incomprehensible unless one speaks the language? *Wayang kulit* is as much a religious experience as an entertainment to the Balinese, so was this the missing element or did it all hinge on the sensitivity, acting skill, and sense of drama of the *dalang* himself? Later, when I saw I Wayan Wija's performance, some of the answers became clearer.

I first met Mr Wija at his home. Although his English is good, it was helpful to have Carmencita Palermo (an Italian who has lived on Bali for two and a half years studying *topeng* dance) acting as interpreter – for more difficult explanations. He kindly showed me a selection of the *wayang kulit* puppets, that he makes himself. They are exquisitely painted with a sensitive eye for colour and brush stroke. The colour, he explained, was not only so that the *dalang* himself can identify them in performance but because they are also sometimes seen by the audience in daylight shows, which are performed in front of the screen.

The profile faces of high-born Balinese characters are less exaggeratedly pointed than Javanese ones and their necks are shorter. Their bodies are depicted from the front view on. The comic characters, however, have profiled bodies to emphasize pot-bellies, rounder and larger eyes, sprouts of real hair, and jaws which, unlike those in Java, move when they speak.

Anyone wishing to buy beautifully crafted *wayang kulit* should call in at Mr I Wayan Mardika Buwana (he is I Wayan Wija's young nephew) in Br. Babakan, Sukawati. He makes full-sized sets or individual puppets of infinitely superior quality to the half-size, less sensitively crafted ones on sale to tourists by street-vendors. Of course, for a cheap set for use with primary school children, the touristy ones would be ideal, but for professional puppeteers or collectors it is best to visit puppet makers in their workshops.

Incidentally, the tourist shops in Sanur, Kuta, and Denpasar sell *wayang golek* (doll-like, three-dimensional puppets), which are very cheerful and bright and make good presents for your children, but a serious puppeteer or collector should bear in mind that these are solely made for tourists, as *wayang golek* is not performed in Bali but in Java.

Wayan Wija is a young (in his thirties), popular *dalang*, the winner of many prestigious prizes and much in demand in Bali not only for his highly talented performances but for his lively and satirical asides on social topics, which are slipped into the main plots. He not only performs the traditional repertoire but has worked with Larry Reed in San Francisco, using giant puppets and also experimenting with mirror effects, where the audience sees the reflections. He is keen to introduce such new ideas to Balinese audiences, though conscious that these must be introduced slowly. For the moment, he is enjoying creating new characters, in particular animals, such as giraffes, squirrels, and even dinosaurs, and introducing them into his version of the Tantri* (rather like Aesop's Fables combined with the Arabian Nights), which are popular with children, and he showed me the cardboard templates he creates when experimenting with new ideas for puppets.

The performance I was invited to was to be part of an *odalan*, a temple ceremony, in Gianyar, which joins up with the urbanized sprawl that spreads over the whole of the south of the island now from the west to the east of Denpasar, the capital. I arrived at 9.00 pm so that I could witness some of the

Illustrations from *Wayang Op Bali* by H Hinzler

:emple ceremony before the performance. Chanting of Kawi (the sacred language only the priests and *dalang* understand) was in progress on a raised platform at the front of the temple, but only a handful of people were offering prayers.

Next door to the temple it was a different story. The *wantilan*, a vast concrete floor space, raised from the ground and approached by steps, open to the air and with a high roof on pillars, was fast filling up with a crowd of all ages. Small children as young as four were running around playing tag, the boys in t-shirts and shorts, the girls in frilly, puff-sleeved dresses. Others sat on the floor. There were no chairs. In a corner was a group of men and boys in a tight circle, with the light of a lamp on the floor shining through the gaps.

Peering through, I could see a ferocious gambling game going on with picture cards laid on the floor (with pictures of a baby, a cockerel, and the various political candidates – Habibie; the black bull of Megawati, who, being a Hindu, is the Balinese favourite...) while three black upturned tumblers were shuffled around by much sleight of hand and bets placed on the pictures. At last, one of the tumblers was upturned to show a dice stuck with the various pictures. The smaller boys, clutching handfuls of rupiah, seemed to be as young as eight or nine, and none of the older men discouraged them from playing.

At the far end of the *wantilan* was a raised stage, and the cotton screen for the *wayang kulit* was being stretched by means of eyelets tied through with string and attached to a bamboo frame. Curtains each side of the stage blocked off any view from the sides. I lifted one of these curtains and exchanged greetings with Mr Wija, who had just arrived, and he kindly gave permission for me to watch the performance from behind the screen.

Four *gender* players sat cross-legged facing each other in pairs at the back of the stage, plus two drummers, a bamboo flautist, a player of a large gong suspended by rope from the stage structure, and a young boy hitting a small gong on a horizontal base. The orchestra can number seven to 12 players. Two assistants sat each side of Mr Wija to hand him puppets. Only a few members of the audience were able to squeeze in and watch from the back. (I had previously asked Mr Wija whether it was true that women were not allowed to watch from the back but must only watch the shadows. He said he was not aware of any rule about this. Perhaps, he said, women in the past chose not to watch at the puppeteer's side since it made them more visible and women might be shy?) I sat on the side of the stage to Mr Wija's left, on the far side of the coffin-like box containing the puppets. I sat next to his bowl of offerings, which included a beautiful plaited disc, intricately cut and folded, made out of dried leaf (banana or palm?) and, unfortunately for me, a smoky brown dried chicken with its head and beak stretched towards me! At the base of the screen was a thick banana tree trunk, which is soft enough for the puppets to be stuck into by their sticks – either to the side, when waiting to go on, or, if motionless in performance, so that the *dalang* can have more than one puppet on stage. Mr Wija sat cross-legged in front of the screen, below and only slightly behind the traditional oil lamp, which looked like a metal gourd with a spout, through which his assistant on his right poured oil throughout the evening, every 15 minutes or so. (The oil was stored in a plastic fuel container, such as we would keep petrol in, and then poured into a plastic bottle, like a soft-drinks bottle, which made – with the metal gourd – a curious mixture of ancient and modern.) As he poured the oil into the lamp the assistant held a sheet of something (which looked like parchment) below the bottle to prevent drips falling on to the *dalang*'s head.

At about 10 pm the *gender* musicians began to play, but this was not the start of the performance. First Mr Wija offered up prayers, involving the sprinkling of holy water, and then, as Mr Wija chanted

(soundlessly), he held his hands together in prayer in front of his face, with a petal held between two fingers along with two joss sticks (for the essence of the offering to mount to the gods). At times, he prayed with his right arm lifted as high as his brow, with the arm supported at the elbow by his left hand. This ceremony took a considerable time, lasting, along with opening the coffin-like box and unpacking the puppets – the good characters on the right, the bad on the left – all to the accompaniment of prayers and music, almost half an hour. I was very conscious that this was a religious ceremony as well as a performance. Finally, there was a brief silence, and then the music struck up again as the *kayon* wavered and shook from one side of the screen to the other, with only its tip touching the screen (the *kayon* is a diamond/leaf shape which symbolizes the Tree of Life or a *gunungan*, the Holy Mountain of Gunung Agung, where the gods live – a photograph of a *kayon* designed and painted by Wayan Wija will appear in the next *Animations*). During this time only repetitive beats by the *gender* were played (two notes sounding in fifths) with Mr Wija hitting the box with a wooden hammer (like a turned knob) with a run of beats to quicken the pace of the accompaniment, or signify the end of a section with a dramatic, final beat. The repetitive beats of the *gender*, the pulsing centre of the lamp's glow on the screen, and the quivering *kayon*, its touches of gold glinting as it moved, induced a trance-like atmosphere.

The performance now commenced: an introductory section where the high-born characters chanted in Kawi, which was then interspersed with everyday dialogue in modern Bahasa Indonesia for the comic characters, who spoke rather than chanted. Usually the orchestra accompanied the high-born characters, and was silent for the comic characters. (Incidentally I noticed that the orchestra took the opportunity to have a quick fag or take a swig from a plastic water bottle!)

However, the difference between the tourist version we had seen earlier and this was immeasurable. Although I did not understand a word, I was enthralled. Wayan Wija has an outstanding range of voices and tones, from deep, high-born male voices to sweet melodic high-born females chanting in Kawi, which were as beautiful and moving as listening to Gregorian chant, down to an array of comic characters which had me shaking with laughter as they lisped, grunted, and burped their way through humorous dialogue which I could almost swear I understood just from the intonation and the skilful, almost Frankie Howard-like use of dramatic pauses.

The characters' movements were as inventive and expressive as a mime-artiste's – as good as Chaplin – while the mocking of stereotypes, with a contemporary touch such as an unfit jogger, had the audience in hoots. Considering that only the arms (apart from the mouths of the comic characters) can move, this is impressive. I was interested to see that only the heads of the puppets were touching the screen, as they were held at an angle. The audience would therefore have only had the head in focus. The rest of the body and arms would be more shadowy, but dramatic effect could be achieved by bringing parts of the puppet in and out of focus – a subtle range of movement could be suggested by these means. At times puppets were placed firmly against the screen: when they were stationary (kept in place with their stick stuck in the bamboo trunk below) or when several puppets were to be on stage at the same time. The talking puppet was therefore the moving one.

Turning the puppets from one side to the other so that they looked in different directions was also skilfully used as a kind of ballet, emphasizing the rhythm and drama of the speech patterns. Sometimes they were slapped around roughly and banged against the cloth, with real banging from the toe-held hammer.

Wajan Wija made good use of lowering and raising the puppets – sometimes a comic

character's head appeared at foot level or crept around the back of another, even coarsely sniffing their behinds. (This was no precious performance but had the full range from the most sensitive subtlety to coarse bawdiness). Not only the traditional Twalèn, with pot-belly and sprout of hair, and his side-kick with a stick-like thinness and high squeaky voice, but the two demon counterparts were coarse and subtle at the same time, with plenty of slapstick but acting skills obviously being paramount.

Then came a fascinating array of animal characters: graceful giraffes, necks swaying, licking each other's neck or bending to rub their backs; tigers stalking prey; and even a chorus of frogs (with tuneful oo's rather than croaks), which was a miniature comic song in its own right. Finally, the inevitable fight between heroes and demons took place, with skilful manipulation of the flight of arrows.

The performance ended with the appearance of the Barong, the mythical creature which possesses a Chinese lion-type face, a hairy body (with long strands like a llama), a beard, and a long tail held upright with a tassel on the end. The Barong, as the symbol of the forces of good, concluded the show, though in the Balinese belief system good and evil are balanced, and while good may win each fight, evil is never totally vanquished.

I was amazed at how quickly the audience dispersed. There was no applause, and when I peered out from the side curtains only a few minutes later the *wantilan* was empty! It was 2 am. I am told that performances can sometimes go on until dawn (4 am).

Mr I Wayan Wija is truly not only a master in his own culture but by any western standards of drama too. He has been invited to the Netherlands in April 2001, so if there is any festival organizer out there who would like to invite him over to the UK, all you would have to pay is the fare across the Channel rather than from Bali. I hope someone will not miss this opportunity. (He takes four orchestra members only on tour). Since rapport with the audience is what Mr Wija tells me interests him most (and which I can corroborate is superb) he would offer an English version of whatever performance was commissioned. He can be contacted in Banjar Kalah, Peliatan, Ubud.

I can recommend a superb CD of Balinese music in general which also incorporates a piece played by Wayan Wija's orchestra. It is called "Bali: A Suite of Tropical Music and Sound," World Network, LC 6759 (manufactured in Germany).

I should like to thank Anna Ingleby and Carmencita Palermo for the advice and help they gave me, which made my stay in Bali so memorable and without which this article would have been impossible.

*The following response to an enquiry regarding Wayan Wija and Tantri was received from Bali and Beyond (<gamelan@pacificnet.net>):

"Wija tells us that Tantri is the same story as *The 1,001 Arabian Nights*. Indian Hindus say that it's the forerunner of Aesop's *Fables*. Either way, the Balinese Tantri is primarily a series of animal stories. Procreation takes centre stage in Wija's production. The music is in Pelog [a seven-tone tuning system] and is drawn from the Semar Pegulingan repertoire. There is an Ellipses Arts CD which has an excerpt from a performance of Tantri by Wija, recorded by David Lewiston. It may be entitled Trance Two, but we don't have a copy here for verification. We are not experts in Wija's wayang, but have seen him perform Tantri many times. If we can be of further assistance, just ask."

Watching brief: BBC 2 is still running every few months *Wayang Golek – Puppeteers of West Java* ("the sights and sounds of an authentic Javanese rod-puppet show accompanied by a traditional percussion orchestra"). It has tended to be shown just after 1 am, but its latest outing was at 7.35 am, Saturday 5 February, a slightly more congenial hour for those without a video.

Polished Performances

19th Ogólnopolski Festival Teatrów Lalek
Opole, Poland, 11-16 October 1999

Peter Charlton

When I arrived in Poland on the 10th of October I had no words of Polish in my vocabulary (I am illiterate in many languages). I now know that "lalka" is the Polish word for puppet. I should also know the Polish word for pick-pocket, as my first few moments in Warsaw featured a pair of these chaps who relieved me of my wallet while I was getting off the bus at Central Station. However, the charming young Polish lady who came to my aid and spent the next hour helping the police stop my credit cards more than compensated for the deeds of the evil ones. In fact, the incident made me wonder about the nature of a puppeteer's life. Less than seven days before English thieves had smashed open my van, parked outside the BAC in Battersea, and, ignoring several thousand pounds' worth of puppets and technical equipment, had simply removed my sports bag, containing a sweaty t-shirt, shorts, and various other items of almost no value. The good guys always outweigh the bad, I find. That incident failed to spoil my evening at the Puppet Centre Birthday celebrations and a pleasant, though draughty, drive home with Vi Philpot; and the Polish thieves certainly didn't spoil an otherwise excellent week in Poland.

I was in Poland as a UNIMA observer at the 19th festival of puppetry in Opole, which is in a region of Poland that was part of Germany until about 1945. Both German and Polish are spoken by most of the town's occupants – unfortunately, I don't speak German either. Language is a problem at foreign festivals, but not a great one. The only irritation was that, as few of the puppeteers taking part in the festival spoke anything but Polish, the three UNIMA reps there – myself and two Germans – were seldom able to discuss puppetry with them. But let's get on with the shows.

I was met at Opole Railway Station by Krystian Kobyłka, the festival director and my host for the week, who is also the director of the Opolski Teatr Lalki i Aktora (the Opole Theatre of Puppets and Actors). Fortunately, Krystian spoke English and is married to a teacher of English ("But, you must understand, she does not teach me!") so we were able to have occasional discussions about what had been seen.

Monday began with the Teatr Lalek Arlekin from Łódź with a play called *Książe Portugalii* (*The Prince of Portugal*). This had been adapted by Henryk Jurkowski. I had been told that Henryk was going to be at the festival and was hoping to renew an acquaintanceship. Sadly, it seems he was taken ill, so didn't attend. I'm not sure what this tale was about, but a king appeared to have upset three witches, and the whole royal family kept turning into hares. But who cares about the plot? Engaging rod puppetry, with the puppets moving with such speed and dexterity that it seemed impossible that there was more than one puppeteer per puppet – until you noticed the complexity of the arm movements. I loved the puppets, the magical scenery, and the excellent sound, though I did find the orchestration rather too rich for comfort. This is becoming somewhat commonplace now that all MDs seem to have computers, and thus whole orchestras are available at the touch of a button. In the "Good Old Days" they would have been forced into more simplicity by the budget! However, a good start – and it was to turn out to be the only show in the entire festival that didn't include humans in its cast.

During the interval between two shows I met my two UNIMA colleagues: Helmut Pogarth, director of Figurentheater, Stuttgart, and Christiane Klutt, now resident in Berlin and a former student on the Central School puppetry course in London. I couldn't have wished for two more charming and interesting friends to spend the week with.

The second show that day was by Teatr Groteska, from Krakow: as you may

imagine, coming across a company with the name Theatre Grotesque brought about a few pangs, and I couldn't help wondering what John Phillips would have made of it all. (I think he may not have been too complimentary.) The play was called *Księga Dobrej Nadzieji* (book of good hope), but could easily have been "The Temptations of St Francis," and Old Nick seemed to be running amok, grabbing souls here, there and everywhere, and tempting poor old St Francis at every turn. The sheer physicality of the puppeteers made for an exhausting evening – an occasional bit of stillness would have been both helpful and restful. The puppets were huge, operated "bunraku"-style by sometimes as many as three puppeteers. Some of the puppets were quite magnificent, and there were a few nice directorial touches such as the puppet Devil himself working the puppets of the souls he was controlling. The director had also had the idea of dressing his puppeteers in Franciscan-like habits instead of the traditional black. An interesting idea, but it did place the puppeteers in the same time zone as the puppets, thus accentuating the presence of the puppeteers rather than the reverse. Therefore an intimate conversation between two characters often had a stage crowded with bodies. I also wondered why St Francis, prior to his conversion, was portrayed as a bit of a wimp and the Angel Gabriel (I think) played as a bit of a ponce. Poor old St Francis, after all his resistance of evil, he gets rewarded by a look at "The Golden Book" when he would probably have preferred a Johnny Morris video. Who'd be a saint?

Tuesday began with an appearance by the "home side" – Opolski Teatr Lalki i Aktora – presenting *La Kukaracza*, directed by our host, Krystian Kobyłka. We all hoped we were going to like this, or the after-show conversation could be embarrassing! Just to make UK puppet companies feel jealous, I should explain that this company has its own theatre complete with large cloakroom and bar (their club was open each evening after the shows until about 1 am), runs a minibus and two coaches, has a scenery store, suite of offices, and – for this production – a team of twelve puppeteers/actors! This was the Theatre of Puppets and Actors so I wasn't expecting an all-puppet production. I was not to be disappointed, as the actors outnumbered the puppets by a considerable margin. But I was thoroughly engaged by the show, which was fast, funny, and accompanied by, at times, almost rock-loud music. *La Kukaracza* means "cockroach," so let's hear it for the little black beasties: not since Don Marquis's *Archie & Mehitabel* in the sixties have cockroaches had much of a good press, and in this show they were the heroes, along with a couple of mice, fighting an unceasing war against humans, dogs, bluebottles, mosquitoes, and a couple of evil sewer rats. They were triumphant, but a few squirts of a cleaner's disinfectant sent them to that dirt heap in the sky. Not a story for Christians to ponder too deeply. The puppets, when they appeared, were fun, especially a mop-head dog and a moth that emerged from its chrysalis in grand style.

The last show that day, *Toporland – a suite for cardboard and double bass*, by Unia Teatr Niemożliwy, Warsaw, was one of the great treats of the festival. A double-bass player performed music based on that of JS Bach while the "pictures" were based on paintings by the Polish artist Roland Topor. The show was performed in a small studio theatre, part of the town's drama theatre. The stage setting was simple: two music-stands, a double bass, and a large roll of corrugated cardboard. For the next hour one musician and two actor/puppeteers produced sheer magic from these seemingly simple beginnings. As the cardboard unrolled it would suddenly produce a door, a man, windows, a seascape complete with helicopter rescue.... Sometimes it would tease you, pose a question, and then decide not to answer it. Sometimes it would answer a question with an answer you were not expecting. A delightful and satisfying show. The whole company is only four strong and the setting very simple and, as there are no

words at all, eminently suitable for festivals in this country. It would be a perfect show for the London Mime Festival or Brighton's *visions*. The director told me that a video is available and I have the company's address. Should be seen!

Wednesday dawned with Olsztyński Teatr Lalek's production of "Mio, Mój Mio." When the interval came I had to admit that I hadn't the faintest idea of what was going on. A child enters into a fantasy where his father is king and dark forces are at work. A mixture of humans and humans inside grotesque figure skins plus a smattering of smaller puppets and effects tell the tale and keep up some visual excitement. The packed house, many standing in the aisles, seemed to be gripped and involved, though there was a little shuffling during the more wordy bits. My first thoughts were: why had they decided to do this play with puppets? Later I wondered why they had decided to do it at all. There may be a good play here struggling to get out, but it wasn't going to be successful in this production. The evil powers were rather cuddly-looking creatures somewhat lacking in the evil and oppressive department. The fights were badly staged, poorly lit, and languidly fought. Sorry, but for me it was a pretty dull affair.

The evening show in the big drama theatre – Bialystocki Teatr Lalek's *Państwo Fajnackich* – was to make up for all this. Two old actors who have spent their lives doing children's theatre reminisce and dream of (or are they haunted by?) the children to whom they have played. There was a lot of verbal humour that I, obviously, couldn't grasp, but nonetheless I thoroughly enjoyed this performance. It was a visual riot with hints of the Marx Brothers, Theatre de Complicite, Monty Python, and The Goon Show. Wonderful stuff. The puppetry provided me with my first experience of "Living Marionettes," as all the "children" sequences were done this way, once with as many as six on the playboard at the same time. The two old actors, played by Andrzej Beya Zaborski and Piotr Damulewicz, were superb.

More was to follow that evening. We were given a short show by 2nd-year students from the puppetry course in Bialystok. I'm told that during the first two years of their course they concentrate on acting, movement, and voice so I shouldn't have expected much puppetry. Well, there wasn't any at all. Everyone around me seemed to think it was funny, I thought it was a bit sad that a bunch of students on a puppetry course, playing at a puppet festival, should choose to "showcase" themselves with a totally non-visual piece of theatre. But perhaps I'm a bit picky?

Thursday began with a performance of *Don Kichot* (*Don Quixote*) by Teatr Baj Pomorski, from Torun. This began delightfully. Don Kichot sits dreamily engrossed in his books whilst his fantasies appear all around him: tiny rod figures trotting along the top of the bookcase and here and there around the furniture; knights killing dragons and rescuing maidens; and even, though I've no idea why, a glimpse of Adam and Eve and the serpent. I thought: Hurrah for puppetry! Then it all began to go sadly wrong. The Don's wife and Sancho Panza and his wife conspire both to disturb and destroy his fantasies and even (a horrible moment for a book collector – I'm glad Ray DaSilva was not present to witness this, for he would have surely cried out in protest!) *burnt his books*. But there was little logic in all this. Sometimes they joined together to sympathize and encourage him, the next moment they teased and ridiculed him. The man is clearly mentally ill and they are baiting him. Why? I wonder whether the director ever pondered this. There was one truly awful moment when they fixed Don to a pillory, went into the audience with a basket of fruit, and encouraged people to throw it at him. There was no questioning of the audience's obedience in doing this, no asking "Are you not ashamed at throwing fruit at a mentally-ill person?" Every production has a right to disturb us – even to the point of

anger (this they certainly achieved with me). I don't think they have the right to leave you confused about their motives.

Next came Teatr Animacji, from Poznan, with *Ubu Król Czyli Polaci*. Playing Alfred Jarry's wonderful *Ubu Roi* on the same evening as *Don Quixote* seems somewhat cruel. Though I've no doubt it was a sound decision by the Festival Director, it does leave the audience in some doubt about its collective sanity – but this perhaps is no bad thing. It is a great play, and this was an excellent production, but, while it did have one short scene which used puppetry (and this was excellently done), I couldn't understand why it had been entered in a puppet festival. Would the National Theatre in London enter its production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in a puppet festival? Or the Young Vic its *More Grimm Tales*? I don't think so, though on the terms of this Polish festival, both would have easily qualified.

Later that evening, in the bar of the puppet theatre, there was a short "duologue" between two humans and two large rod-puppets staged by students from the local drama school. Sight-lines and language barrier prevented me from understanding much of what was happening, but it was encouraging to see some students making use of puppets.

Friday's first show was another by Teatr Animacji – this time *0 Diabełku Widełku*, a children's theatre production about a little boy devil who has fallen in love with a little girl angel, much to the chagrin of both sets of parents. It was acted and directed well and had an amusing set of props. There was also a sad lack of puppets. One elderly member of the Polish puppetry profession sitting next to me said at the end of the performance: "I think next year there should be a rule that all productions must include some puppets!" Amen, says I.

Friday evening and time for the final show in the drama theatre, one not entered in the festival in the competitive sense but shrouded in mystery before it began. "Be sure to get there early," I was warned. "Why? The drama theatre is huge." "No, no, there will be only 60 seats available." We got there early and found that the only seats available were on the stage of the theatre, and the whole of that area had been surrounded by black cloths. The lighting was very dim. So dim that just getting to your seat was difficult. *This just would not be possible under English theatre regulations: not an exit sign visible!* The performance was *Skrzydło Anioła* by Teatr Animacji, the work of the almost legendary Leszek Mądzik, master of "black theatre." Without doubt this was the prize plum of the festival. The storyline was simple: a child has died, her parents find that "letting go" is not easy, and the grieving becomes a journey of sorrowing. You have to concentrate hard: this darkness is very dark and at times you are not sure what you have seen. A mask? No, a body? Is that a grave? No, perhaps it's a coffin? The coffin moves, a woman stands, arms raised. A carriage moves across the stage, disappears and returns. The accompanying music is as beautiful, and as hypnotic, as the scenes. The puppetry is pure joy and the use of light would make Gren Middleton ecstatic. At the end nobody applauded: it did not seem appropriate. Our silence, as we filed out of the theatre, applauded the darkness. Later that evening I was fortunate enough to meet Leszek Mądzik, the creator of this beautiful piece, and, through a mixture of sign language and my poor French, thank him for a wonderful experience.

Yet another student piece followed this, but it would have had to be a really good act to follow what I had just seen. This seemed to be about puppeteers getting their arms tired or was it about puppets grumbling about the lack of puppetry in the festival? Too wordy to mean much to me, but, although there weren't any puppets, at least the actors used masks.

For our final piece of what had become a long day of theatre-going, we were whisked away on buses for a late-night show in a

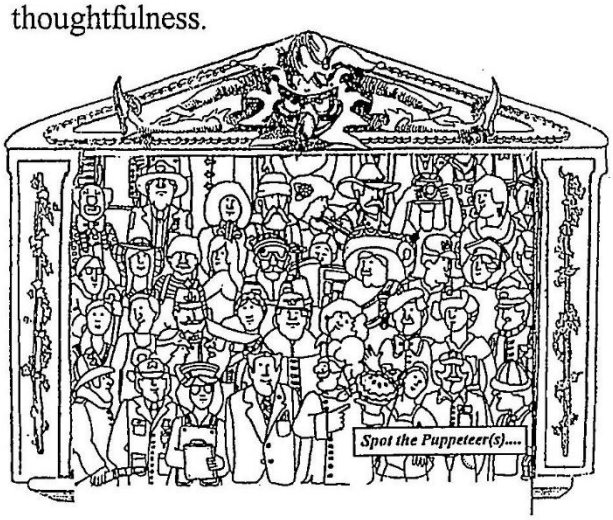
huge, cold warehouse on the outskirts of town. Teatr Ognia i Papieru (Theatre of Fire and Paper), from Łódź, with *Drżenie* [*drżenie* means "trembling, trepidation, thrill"]. A woman acting the part of a little girl has paper ships, paper hats, paper aeroplanes, even paper hearts and a paper angel, and bit by bit she sets fire to them all (*don't try this at home, children!*). Lots of concentration and all done with great style. Perhaps it was the coldness and dampness of the night and venue, perhaps it was just one show too many that day, but I found it all a little pretentious and dull. My previous experience of "fire" shows has been from Red Earth and Same Sky, and they tend to be somewhat bigger and more spectacular. [See *Animations* June-July 1998 and the last *Bulletin* for more on the Polish company.]

Saturday was the final show of the festival – and again a "non-competitor." Our host company, Opolski Teatr Lalki i Aktora, presented *Sen* (*Dream*). No words here to confuse or confound us; in fact, in some ways it was "make up your own mind" time. A series of images moved in and out, puppets engaged in play and in senseless violence, a clown (human) both played childish games and contemplated suicide. A sad, broken clown this, and he put me in mind of Grimaldi when he made his final benefit appearance at Sadlers Wells (something I've only read about, I hasten to add) barely able to walk but still able to move his audience. Was this about the uselessness of violence, the fear of authority, the power of music, the mourning of a lost childhood? Probably all of this and more besides. Beautifully conceived, directed, and performed. How good that the final show of the festival should also demonstrate how much more powerful puppets are than their human counterparts!

The final "act"' of the festival was the awards and closing ceremony: other festivals take note, there were about ten awards and the whole event was over in under ten minutes! Winners (I'm not sure exactly what category they were in) were *Toporland*, *La Kukaracza*, *Państwo Fajnackich* and, I think, *Ubu Roi*. I believe Kraków's Teatr Groteska also won something, but I don't know what.

Final musings: apart from my two German colleagues, the only people there I managed to chat with were our host, Krystian Kobyłka, who was sadly struck down by a nasty virus two days before the end of the festival; Adam, a designer of both puppet and human theatre; a charming Polish puppeteer/director called Merek; and a party of Hungarian artists who were visiting the town with an art exhibition. There was one topic that united us – the lack of puppets in many of the shows. Good as many of the shows were, I had to wonder how they qualified for a puppet festival. One of the Hungarian artists said that this was also becoming a big problem in his country. The problem, to my mind, is that directors begin casting actors and not puppeteers, so the accent is on the acting performance and not the puppeteering skills. Sometimes it shows! And what happens to the displaced puppeteers? Aren't you in danger of disillusioning and losing talent? Please discuss, students should not fill more than four sides of foolscap.

One last memory: I was sitting over dinner with my two German colleagues, we had been discussing the shows or some aspect of puppetry, but they had moved on to discuss something else which didn't include me, however, they still talked in English. A small thing perhaps, but I was touched by their, perhaps unconscious, thoughtfulness.



Spot the Puppeteer from *South West Puppeteers Newsletter* with trimmings from Woodensconce

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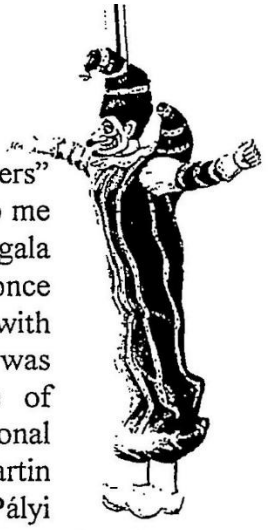
Banská Bystrica, Central Slovakia, 8-10 September 1999

Radvaň – "Paradise for Puppeteers"

Whether coming from Prague, Brno, or Bratislava, the contrast is marked as the train makes its sedate way up through the wooded hillside, with large birds of prey circling overhead, toward Banská Bystrica, which is located roughly the same distance from the Slovak and Hungarian capitals. Banská Bystrica is a university town, which was already an important cultural centre in the Middle Ages, with one of the first printing houses in the country (1577). Buildings in Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical styles are represented in the old town, whose main square, with its open-air cafés, overlooked by a splendid bell-tower, is faced by elegant buildings painted in pastel shades.

Radvaň Manor, a late Renaissance house (1552) which belonged to the Radvanský family, is in the new, unpicturesque part of town, but is, fortunately, protected from the circumambient urban ordinariness by trees. This fine building, albeit in need of refurbishment, was the venue for the festival organized by Anton Anderle to mark the 80th anniversary of the founding of the family's puppet theatre in Radvaň, and, incidentally, provide Slovakia with an international puppet festival – the two usual ones having been cancelled owing to lack of funds. (This festival did obtain some official local funding – for which sincere thanks – but it was, I know, a real financial struggle for Anton – festival puppeteers/organizers here will know this script well.)

The shows took place in the internal courtyard or in one of the halls. However, most of the tall rooms, some with delicate ceiling decorations, were tenanted by a generous selection of figures from the wonderful Anderle collection of traditional puppets (over 600 in all), posters, and playbills. Anton goes back, on his grandmother's side, to Ján Stražan, the first Slovak puppeteer (born Teplička, near Žilina, in 1856).



Jan Klaassen as a dupák. This highly unusual version of the puppet was specially commissioned from Anton Anderle by Otto van der Mieden, whose puppetry museum is located in Vorchten, a village near Zwolle. The illustration is by Hetty Paërl, the well-known Dutch writer on puppetry.

A "paradise for puppeteers" was what was whispered to me during the festival's gala opening evening, which, once the opening ceremony, with dignitaries in attendance, was over, gave us by virtue of excerpts from traditional shows, performed by Martin Bridle with Punch, János Pályi with Vitéz László, Salvatore Gatto with Pulcinella, and Anton Anderle with Gašparko, a foretaste of what the next two days held.

Heinz Anger from Austria put on two Kasperl shows, one featuring a thief and a witch, the other a devil and a crocodile. His delivery was quiet and measured, lacking the energy and projection of some other performers. I was particularly pleased to see the crocodile here, given Michael Byrom's article last year about the source of that creature in Punch and Judy. He argued in favour of France, positing a date of 1861, but the crocodile does nonetheless make a creditably early appearance in a Kasperl show (1889). The fearsome creature done battle with does not, of course, have to be a crocodylus, though the dog (il Cane) in Gatto's *Pulcinella*, with its long brown furry neck and elongated jaw, is a croc in all but name.

At one level, of course, you are aware of the similarities of traditional theatre in Europe, but there is nothing quite like seeing traditional shows from different countries, one after the other, for those consonances to be reinforced. There is much more in common than the protagonist equipped with slapstick, bastone, or saucepan in this physical theatre par excellence, or even the plot of the stories with their bashing of victims, hangings, and counting scenes. A great sense of (natural) rhythm, timing, and vocality (considerable range of voice, enjoyment of language and its sonic possibilities, patter, repetition, silly "he's

behind you" panto routines) are also *essential* components of traditional puppetry. Many of these features should perhaps be part of all puppet performances. And I am not saying that you cannot have bad performances of traditional theatre – of course you can – but it is almost as if a performance lacking these qualities is not *in the tradition*, is traditional only in a purely nominal and empty sense.

All of these qualities are possessed by Salvatore Gatto. The graveyard scene in *Pulcinella*, for example, where an unseen third party creates chaos as Pulcinella attempts to wedge a corpse into a coffin, is a great comic turn. (While waiting to see Gatto live, readers might like to know that a video featuring four scenes, including the aforementioned "Il Morte," is available: *Pulcinella*, 40-minutes duration, £12.50). When Salvatore Gatto is compared to that other great Pulcinella performer, Bruno Leone (whose pupil he was), an anatomical metaphor is often employed to describe their different ways of performing (and we are, of course, dealing here with emphasis rather than antithesis): Leone is the "head," Gatto the "stomach." They worked together, then fell out, but are now, I am told, back together, and I should very much like to see them working side by side. A treat to look forward to.

An impromptu, post-show "tutorial" delivered by Gatto indicated that the *pivetta* is of a different size to the swazzle and occupies a different position in the mouth – also, unlike the swazzle, where, if you swallow it, you let nature take its course, with the *pivetta* you take your life in your mouth; there is also more variety of sound than with the swazzle. I will let Punch men and women engage in argument here, if dispute there must be. McCormick and Pratasik, writing in their recent book of practitioners like Paolo Comentale, Bruno Leone, and Salvatore Gatto, opine: "Not only can they produce intelligible sounds, they have also become *virtuosi* in their use of the instrument to generate a rhythm for the show."

There was universal disappointment when we learned that Henrik Kemény would not (owing to illness in the family) be coming to Banská, but our spirits lifted and sense of expectation grew when we were told that his replacement, János Pályi, was there on Kemény's recommendation.

I do not know which play Pályi will be bringing with him to the Midlands Millennium Jamboree (there are perhaps 18 stories in the Vitéz László canon today), but if it is the classic *The Cursed Mill*, which he performed in Slovakia, relish in particular the spirited "bullfight with Mephisto" and the slo-mo employed to great effect in contrast to the rapid-fire action of the saucepan-wielding fight scenes.

Street theatre, stilt-walking, and *commedia dell'arte* form part of Pályi's CV. He first took up Vitéz László with a 10-minute piece eight years ago and then developed him, picking up some foreign festival prizes (Istanbul, Zagreb) in the meantime. During that time he deliberately avoided Kemény's show, wanting to create his own style and not be (over-)influenced by him. His intention now, however, was to work with Kemény (and he may already have done so). There are, I am told, two or three street puppeteers who perform with Vitéz László, but the question of who will eventually take over from the consummate Kemény (and may he enjoy many, many more years of performing) has long concerned those interested in the survival of this Magyar tradition. It will be for the Hungarians to judge the question of succession, but, as far as the foreign connoisseurs at the festival were concerned, Vitéz looked to be in safe hands.

Former puppetry students of the Bratislava Performing Arts Academy put on *Don Giovanni*. The play was a play within a play, the relationships of the glove-puppets in the booth being mimicked by the performers in their own lives (the backstage amours of

the manipulators being shown by the simple expedient of turning the booth round). There were good dramatic moments, from the first bang on the room of the hall through which the actors/puppeteers/singers entered (yes, they did all three, including singing live to recorded music, only the basso profundo of the final scene being on tape) to a guardian of the law taking a puppeteer away. My only real criticism is that it would, I suspect, have been a little sharper when first performed by the students at college 2½ years earlier. The contrast of the "rough music" of the traditional puppet booth with the classical opera made its inclusion in the festival highly appropriate.

The Gallant Tailor was performed by Olaf Bernstengel from Germany. It had artful scenery and props; displayed delicate manipulation, particularly with tiny figures, on what was a small stage ("home theatre"); and contained genuinely comic episodes, particularly those involving the outwitting of forest animals. When I spoke to him about the show later in the week, the first thing he said was: "You didn't see the show on the first day, did you? I was dreadful. The journey...." I assured him I had and reassured him that I enjoyed it. It was not in fact technically perfect, though that scarcely marred the enjoyment, but one never doubted his skill as a puppeteer. It made me think of two Chomskyan terms in vogue when I was studying linguistics long ago – "performance" and "competence." We all make the occasional "fluff," an error of performance – the consequence of momentary lack of attention, tiredness, distraction etc – but as native speakers we know the rules of our language implicitly and are competent in it. We differ in this regard from a foreign speaker of the language. When you watched Bernstengel you were never in any doubt that you were in the presence of not just a native but a highly fluent speaker of the language of puppetry. As it happens, this was later confirmed by a short, masterly demonstration of a trapeze artist marionette – though, as I've said, there were no Doubting Thomases in the room.

Martin Bridle has many fans in Banská Bystrica, which he was visiting for the second time. I particularly liked the intricate kissing routine and sausage-machine number, as did the children, with whom there was always a lot of interaction. His swazzling went down particularly well with a TV crew, which, I suspect had not heard its like before. (There was good local TV coverage – something from the festival to be seen each day. I was pleased that the town as a whole was able to see what a treasure they had in Anderle. The shows in fact always had full houses, and, if I remember aright, even an extra performance on one occasion to keep the customers happy).

Piškanderdula is difficult to describe. It is a poetic, intimate piece which exists in a dreamlike world of ceremony where adults possess a childlike sensibility and where puppets are treated like children. The characterful wooden figures, made by František Vítek, are operated by Věra Říčařová in a semiobscurity populated, in addition to puppets, by ancient phonographs and other dusty bric-a-brac. The couple are from Hradec Králové and worked with Drak in its early years. I had first seen the show over a decade earlier, at the ICA, when it opened up to me, a newcomer to puppetry, the possibilities of puppetry – just as Faulty Optic, operating in a quite different mode, was to do just a little later. My wholly positive impressions of it then have not been entirely erased by my second experience, but on this occasion I did feel – with considerable regret – that time had not treated it kindly and that it was now a period piece from the museum of the era of "happenings." However, to be fair, I should report that a young Slovak with whom I discussed the performance found it very

touching. Its rationale within the festival was more to do with the figures themselves, which have wonderful presence and whose traditional lineage is immediately discernible, than the passé aesthetic of the piece.

Anton Anderle is a master of rod puppetry (the quintessential Czech/Slovak form). He presented two highly contrasting pieces: *The Smallest Circus in the World* and *Don Šajn* (Don Juan). I have written enthusiastically about these shows before, but let me quote someone who knows, a practitioner (Peter Charlton) on a previous performance of *The Circus*: "The sheer energy of the performance is enough to buoy you up for the rest of the day... even for one who has seen a lot of puppet circuses. I don't think I've ever before seen a strong-man act where I believed the barbells were truly heavy, nor a tight-rope walker with so much beauty and grace." The tiny MC, Kuki (a gentle Gašparko), is a charming, mischievous, and sweet but never cloying figure; the dances – whether of a couple or a (tour de force) of a round dance – are charming (dances always have been a hit with audiences and have long been a staple ingredient of trad plays); while the maladroit attempts of Gašparko to mount his horse always cause a riot of laughter, no matter how often they have been seen. An air of well-being pervades the whole show.

Don Šajn (Don Juan) is performed presto. Slovak Devils don't hang about (except in one sense, of course), and honest stick-wielding peasant Šrhola has his work cut out repelling diabolical attacks. Gašparko is far too cowardly even to consider protecting his master, and when, eventually, the Don is carried off to the fires of hell by a couple of devils and a ghost, his only concern is the loss of a meal ticket. The visual humour of the devil-bashing is enhanced by comic dialogue, where Gašparko is in his element.

The question of language in puppetry has been raised by two contributors to this issue. Puppetry can be understood without words. Hence the proliferation of such shows for tourists in Prague, for example. And some puppetry is, after all, deliberately conceived as wordless for its own intrinsic reasons. Certainly, spectators everywhere can and do enjoy Anton Anderle's performances enormously (see previous reviews by diverse hands in these pages and elsewhere), for they are undeniably highly visual, and the modulation of his rich voice also helps carry you along. But it was a revelation to hear the response of his home *audience* (so many encores) as opposed to what I had witnessed in Budapest and London. Partly it is, of course, because they are themselves part of the culture from which the traditional characters they love – Gašparko, Škrhola, Jancsi Paprika – have sprung, but also it is simply because they understand. For all the enjoyment we genuinely experience at foreign shows, it is limited by the fact that we often literally do not know what is being said. It is clearly difficult to estimate the relative contribution of the verbal to the whole in a puppet show where a foreign language is concerned, but I have a feeling that we tend to underestimate it.

The superlative skill of the two musicians whom I have heard accompanying Anton Anderle at different times, namely Juraj Hamar and Ján Palovič, greatly enhance the aural pleasure too, though that obtains whether at home or abroad. Both were present at the festival, the latter "on duty." The folk tradition is very strong in the upland areas of Slovakia, and the instrument playing – particularly on diverse wind instruments, including the fujara, a two-metre-long alphorn – and the singing are fittingly of a high order. Recordings of Juraj's and Ján's work are available.

We were very fortunate to see the festival out under the stars with the last-ever performance of the celebrated *Minas Tirith - Minas Morgul* by Teatro Tatro (from Nitra), a JRR Tolkien-inspired piece which gave scope for wooden stringed actors on the stage and live actors off (sometimes on stilts, draped in forbidding black cloaks), illuminated by fire and fireworks, to give us all a spectacular, high-energy, high-decibel send-off.

Anderle is unique, but it was nice to see him replicated twice over. At the end of the festival, he was presented with a puppet of Anderle holding an Anderle. (Photographs of the festival, including one of this puppet, which was made by Jana Pogorielová, will appear in the next *Animations*).

Finally, I should like to thank Anton and his whole family, particularly his wife, Zlatka, for being so exceptionally hospitable and providing such superb entertainment to all of us who "took to the hills" last September.

Lack of space has kept out a companion piece on the Czech Lands. It may be possible to include it in the next issue.

Media Watch

Blazing Away Still

In case you thought the fire leitmotif of the November issue was extinguished, under "The Bonfire that did for Trumpton Fire Brigade" *The Daily Telegraph* (10 11 99) lamented the loss of the puppets created by Gordon Murray for the television series *Trumpton* and *Camberwick Green*. Murray said he had "burnt the puppets when they became worn out from being filmed and he had no regrets." This, however, was clearly too hot a story for journalist Michael Fleet to leave, and the opening paragraph of his next day's piece ran: "One performer escaped the blaze that destroyed the inhabitants of *Trumpton* and *Camberwick Green* more than 20 years ago, *The Daily Telegraph* can reveal." Murray had thrown about 60 of his puppets on to a bonfire unaware that one of his troupe, a soldier, had escaped: "The bodies were made of foam and I knew they would not last well, which is why I destroyed them," Murray explained.

Captain Flack had seen that the Mayor was in trouble, so he ordered Driver McGrew to stop the fire engine. They climbed out.

Visitors to Cardiff's Centre for Visual Arts voted 95% in favour of children's cartoon character Fireman Sam in a poll to determine who had done most for Wales since the national assembly was set up (*The Guardian* 08 12 99). Giant Geordie puppets were to be set ablaze on the Tyne in Newcastle as part of the millennial celebrations (*The Observer*, 19 12 99).

Digital Matters

There is a verbal rival to synthespian: vactor, as in the lovely Ananova who will soon be reading the news on the Press Association's website. The "v" stands for virtual rather than vacuous and the android is created by Digital Animations and uses text-to-speech software from the specialist company Lernout & Hauspie.

Virtual Muppets: Shortly before his death in 1990, Jim Henson began a project designed to exploit a technology that can send high-quality images over a slow net connection, and it has now been carried on by Dotcomix. The idea is simple: rather than transmitting every frame of an animation, a character's body shape is stored on the user's hard drive, so only its movements need to be sent over the Net. Demonstration characters can be downloaded from the Dotcomix website at www.dotcomix.com

To see how things have moved on in the visual-effects department since Georges Méliès's *Le Voyage dans La Lune*, see *The Observer Magazine* (12 12 99).

Animal Behaviour

The Sunday Mirror (06 02 00) billed the return of two squeaky-voiced porkers from the fifties and sixties as "one of the most amazing comebacks for years" in a page-long Dennis Elam "Exclusive" [?] devoted to Brno-born puppeteers Jan and Vlasta Dalibor, who found asylum here in 1948. Pinky and Perky are part of a £500,000 deal involving the merchandising of the fibreglass piglets (a symbol of luck in Czechoslovakia, and here too, apparently,) and their return to television screens next year.

I fear for these creatures from a more innocent age, now bought up by the Just Group, if, according to Paula Hawkins (*The Times*, 31 01 00), "to re-establish their global brand" "they will have to compete with much more modern children's characters also held by Just Group, including... "the Butt Ugly Martians [!]."

For one bear, though, it is clearly even more of a bull market. According to an Associated Newspapers piece entitled "Sooty sweeps up in £100m deal" (read on the Internet 21 12 99): "Britain's favourite glove puppet is about to be launched globally in a marketing deal which could be worth £100 million," taking him into the "super-league of successful British character exports."

This, however, is dwarfed by Aardman's deal ("Wallace and Gromit creator in £150m Spielberg deal," *The Independent* 29 10 99; "Wallace and Gromit's Hollywood deal," *The Guardian* the same day), the first new project planned under which is tentatively titled *The Tortoise and the Hare*, inspired by Aesop's fable. You can now see W&G on the WWW: Aardman has signed an agreement with AtomFilms whereby excerpts of Nick Park's films will be shown at //www.atomfilms.com/ which is a showcase for animation (*The Independent* 15 01 00). Aardman's own site is www.aardman.com

Another deal, which may be of more immediate relevance to puppeteers and puppetry enthusiasts in general, is the sale of the Henson group. It is not known, for example, whether this will have an impact on the International Festival of Puppet Theatre in New York (the biggest festival in the States), which the Jim Henson Foundation has presented. The following is excerpted from Reuters reports on 21 February:

Promising to revive the Muppets, the German family media group EM.TV & Merchandising AG has bought The Jim Henson Company for $680 million in cash and stock, a key deal in its drive to expand globally.

The purchase swells its library with 453 hours of programming, including *The Muppet Show*, and gives it access to the US and Asian markets.

Henson's other best-known face is from the educational children's puppet show *Sesame Street.* The show airs in more than 140 countries and is the winner of more than 50 US Emmy Awards. But more significant for EM.TV's global expansion plans are Henson's stakes in the key US and Asian markets. Henson has a holding in the fast-growing Odyssey Channel, operated jointly with Hallmark Entertainment, which reaches more than 30 million cable subscribers. Also with Hallmark, it operates the Kermit Channel, which airs in Asia.

Radio TV Film

Bob Monkhouse (who allegedly won a part in the *Thunderbirds* movie by not asking for too much money) presented *Thunderbirds Are Go*, a programme about Gerry "I had illusions of making pictures like Ben Hur, not puppet films" Anderson on Radio 2. Trivial pursuits for puppeteers: Who voiced Lady Penelope? Too easy: Gerry's wife, Sylvia. But who played Captain Scarlet and whom was that actor impersonating on the "Morecambe and Wise Show" when Anderson heard him and decided that was the voice he wanted? Troy Tempest was, of course, modelled on...? I learned elsewhere that the *Thunderbird* stars are to be "silicon enhanced" for a video games version. Sci Entertainment will launch the game by 2001,

to follow the broadcast of a digitally remastered version of the 32 episodes on BBC 2 next autumn.

BBC I showed *The Wonderful World of Puppets* (03 01 00). This was a (50-minute) programme in serious need of a subtitle – it was in fact about British TV puppets. The rollcall included Muffin, Sooty, Bill and Ben (the new ones have lip synch, colour, and stop action (no strings)), Pinky and Perky Basil Brush, Roland Rat et al. Gerry Anderson, Craig Crane (George) and Ronnie Le Drew (Zippy) were among the puppeteers who spoke.

BBC 2's *Gormenghast*, which I admired wholly and enjoyed in parts, arose in lunch-time conversation at the Bristol *Puppet Slam!* and I was reminded of Nancy Banks-Smith's comment in *The Guardian*: "I am increasingly surprised and sorry that *Gormenghast* was not animated rather than acted. It might have been magical."

Reviewing the docudrama on the Yorkshire Ripper in *The Independent* (03 02 00), Robert Hanks pithily rendered the appearance of the actor playing George Oldfield, the Assistant Chief Constable in charge of the enquiry: "[Alun] Armstrong's scraggy face – Mr Punch nauseous on a diet of Scotch and raw meat – suggests a scale of emotions and an abrasiveness that doesn't sit easily in the confines of most roles, or of television at all."

Restoring the Restoration Punch

Glyn Edwards has succeeded where the Hangman failed: he has strung up Punch in his *Millennium Mischief* to produce a marionette without hang-ups. If you don't catch its last performance on the Puppet Barge in Little Venice (March 12), you can catch up with it during the barge's summer meandering down the Thames.

Howdy Not So Doody

The Bulletin recently carried a piece entitled "Creators squabble over Howdy." *The New York Times* carried on its front page (27 02 00) a long article (1,650 words) by Corey Kilgannon "Say, Kids, What Time Is It? Howdy Doody Custody Time" plus a photo of Velma Jonson operating Howdy. (The article, which chronicles the puppet's illustrious history, can be read on-line at the puptcrit site.) The article begins:

"In a splashy ceremony at Rockefeller Center earlier this month, cameras rolled and an adoring throng applauded as a redheaded, freckle-faced puppet was elevated into the television pantheon.

"Surviving cast members, writers and producers of 'The Howdy Doody Show' – most in their 80's – gathered once more to see a bronze star uncovered for the beloved cowboy marionette on NBC-TV's 'Walk of Fame,' beside those of two flesh-and-blood giants of TV's golden age, Sid Caesar and Milton Berle.

"But Howdy wasn't there. He was locked in a trunk in a bank vault in New London, Conn., where he has been for the last year, and it may take a judge's order to get him out."

Puppets, Peplums, and Pasta

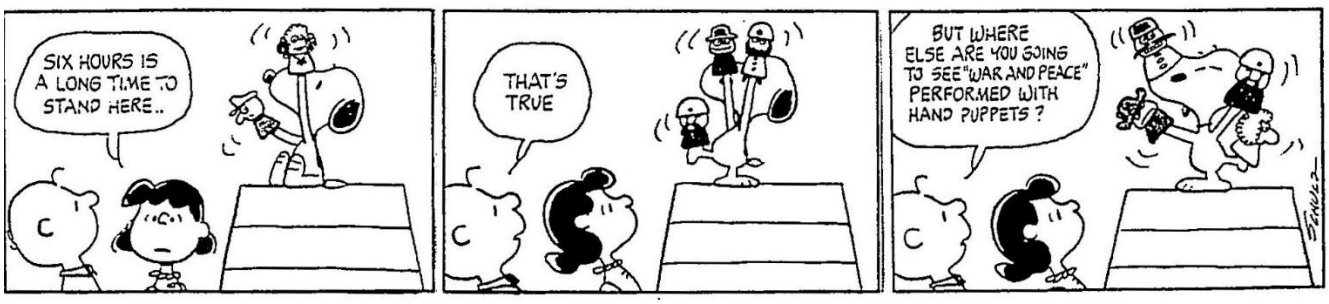
I have mentioned before the Javanese *wayang kulit* episodes in *Once Upon a Time in America*, but had not realized that Sergio Leone had a love of puppets, which is recounted in the book *Sergio Leone: Something To Do with Death* (Faber, £20), just published by professor Christopher Frayling (rector of the Royal College of Art and the author of several books on "popular" culture, including one on spaghetti westerns). A *Fistful of Dollars* is said to have drawn on Leone's love of Neapolitan puppet theatre.

Caoutchouc Combatants: No Rubber-Stamping

Moscow's *Kommersant* (15 02 00) carried a Natalya Gridneva article entitled "Gennadiy Zyuganov Gets To Love His Latex Puppet a Bit." In it the Communist leader is cited defending the NTV *Kukly* programme and pointing out the threat to the Putin puppet and freedom of expression as a whole in Russia. The satirical puppet show has been menaced by politicians of various stripes

since its inception, and Zyuganov as counsel for the defence is something of a role reversal, the Communists having vehemently attacked the puppet show several times in the past, even instituting criminal proceedings against the programme in 1995 for "impugning the honour and dignity of an official." The Communists again took umbrage in April 1999, when party leaders Gennadiy Zyuganov and Gennadiy Seleznev – who form a long-running double act on the show, each addressing the other as "Gena" – were depicted as running the party congress like a Nazi-style rally. However, the main actor on the political/puppet stage now is the acting president, who is of right-wing persuasion, so, while some, eg Zhirinovskiy, want to close *Kukly* down because it depicts Putin in a manner that "undermines the authority of the government," and three St Petersburg academics from Putin's alma mater likewise direct their fire at it for lèse-majesté; others, Communists included, champion the freedom of the air waves. For more on this, see the same day's *The Daily Telegraph*, which describes how recent programmes have depicted the acting head of state as a mad doctor, dullard, and 19th-century tsar. (The episode broadcast on Sunday 13 February, entitled "The Decembrists" and set in Taganrog in 1825, was very stylish.) *The Telegraph* includes a photograph of a Yeltsin puppet. I myself much prefer Gennadiy Zyuganov, who is a potato head even before the anti-imagemakers get to work on him. *Segodnya*'s lead story on 10 February, headlined "The Puppet Bashers," is actually a scathing attack on the three academics in particular and intellectuals' abnegating responsibility in general: "The authorities in Russia do not need to win the affection of their subjects. Love for the authorities is a genetic and historical phenomenon, dating back to the times when everybody was subjected to flogging, when everyone served, and when currying favour with the authorities was the goal of one's life." The tenor of Leonid Radzikhovskiy's article can be summed up as too many bootlickers and not enough Babitskiys, though that journalist's fate in Chechnya stands as a warning to dissenters. However, Radzikhovskiy issues his own warning to the "puppet-bashers": "What has happened in St Petersburg is a fresh scenario for the *Kukly* program. When a group of serving St Petersburg intellectuals begins to fight against puppets they are simply asking to become characters in a new *Kukly* program. These are the rules of the genre." (A translation of this article is available.) The month-long runup to the presidential election (26 March) will provide lots of ammunition. And the news war is hotting up. On 22 February NTV's reputable *Glas Naroda* (Voice of the People) programme devoted its 1½ hours to the *Kukly*. A briefly review of its chequered history, interspersed with excerpts from programmes which caused controversy, was followed by a studio discussion, including *Kukly* creator Shenderovich, Yeltsin press secretary Yakushkin, and studio guests Boris Nemtsov (young, reforming former minister and current governor of Nizhniy Novgorod) and Yuriy Nikiforovich, among others.

The Guardian (18 02 00) has a slight piece entitled "Sons of Spitting Image rant on" which says nothing new except perhaps in the final two paragraphs: "The politicians caught up in Germany's sleaze controversy are getting off lightly. The Spitting Image-style Hurra Deutschland is off the air, but it


SIX HOURS IS A LONG TIME TO STAND HERE..
THAT'S TRUE
BUT WHERE ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO SEE "WAR AND PEACE" PERFORMED WITH HAND PUPPETS ?

was a pretty tame affair. Last year, however, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder threatened to sue a programme on the private RTL channel which implied that he was a sex fetishist."

The opening footage of Timothy Garton Ash's program on Václav Havel (a salutary antidote to John Keane's recent "tragic" biography of him), part of the *Freedom's Battle* series about Central Europe, televised toward the end of last year, was of the president as guyed on the *Gumáci* (singular, *gumák* < *guma*, "rubber"). It then showed the real Havel visiting the Laterna Magica, in its original building and location, which was the headquarters for the intellectuals planning the Velvet Revolution, as well as archive footage of that theatre of politics. (The Laterna Magica, which was particularly associated with the director Alfred Radok and the stage-designer Josef Svoboda, first became known at EXPO 58 in Brussels. The presentation used no words, only a combination of film projection, dance, sound, lights, pantomime, and black theatre.)

"L'autre visage des Guignols" is the title of a two-page feature in the *Le Monde* supplement (13-14 02 00). It contends that the rubber puppets of Canal+'s long running and still top audience puller "are no longer the barometer of political life they were" and puts this down to the failure of the new trio in charge – Bruno Gaccio, one of the founders; Franck Magnier, with an advertising background; and Alexandre Charlot, ex-*Charlie Hebdo* – to find "the right tone." There are interviews with all three.

It also reports that 15 December 2000 will see the Guignols' making their entrée into the Musée national des arts et traditions populaires, Paris, where they will sit alongside Joan of Arc, Tristan and Iseult, and Polichinelle as part of an exhibition called *One Thousand Years of Popular Heroes in Europe*. Mady Lafargue, an ethnologist, whose initiative the exhibition is, says: "We will speak of the Guignols in 500 years' time."

The Worldwide Art Of Puppetry: Unima 2000

Penny Francis

The UNIMA Commission for Communication and Publications is pleased to announce the publication of the above title for the grand UNIMA Congress and International Festival this summer. Of course, the book will available for you to buy even if you have the bad luck not to be able to attend what promises to be one of the best congresses ever. The contents of the book, which has been designed by an exciting graphic artist from Poland and has a text in English and French, are as follows:

Section I: An overview of the state of the art form and its development over the last 20 years. There are articles and "testimonies" from eminent practitioners, including designers and performers such as Peter Schumann, Luc Amoros, Petr Matásek of DRAK, Stephen Mottram, Gary Friedman, Richard Bradshaw, Achim Freyer, and Hoichi Otomoto (of Dondoro). This section has "Reflections" on special subjects such as Therapeutic Puppetry (Aronoff), The Language of the Puppet (Jurkowski), the Electronic Media (Asch) and Education (Dolci). There are longer introductory articles by such as Michael Meschke, Brunella Eruli (editor of *PUCK*) and Penny Francis.

Section II: this is all about UNIMA, its history (by Margareta Niculescu) and personalities who have helped to shape and develop it.

Section III: a directory of contacts: schools, museums, periodicals, independent centres, websites, and so forth.

We believe the book will be celebratory, useful and attractive, an affirmation of the dynamism and diversity of contemporary puppetry – and of UNIMA!

Hope you buy it. For the how and the where, watch this space

Berlin is just up the road from Magdeburg, and the capital's puppet museum is, as you will see below, worth a visit. The "outsider's" view is provided by a German-trained architectural historian, who spends half the year lecturing in this country.

The Berlin Puppet Theatre Museum

Dirk Hansen

The world of puppetry seems to be everywhere very much hidden. It does not seem to be part of the cultural mainstream. The situation in Berlin is symptomatic. There is extraordinary activity here, with over 80 puppet theatre groups and a puppet theatre museum with one of the biggest private puppet collections in Europe (more than 2,000 puppets together with original texts of plays, posters etc). Yet the puppet theatre scene in Berlin is not part of the thriving world of the cultural margins here. It is on the fringe of the fringe.

Though its traditions are older than most, the city has not very much time for it financially or otherwise. Perhaps puppet theatre is still only seen as something just for kids. Or one leaves it to long-running TV programmes (Augsburger Puppenstube) to make a go of it. If it were not for all the primary school classes which are herded into the performances the world of puppetry would hardly exist at all.

For an outsider, it is apparently run by enthusiasts. In this respect the puppet theatre museum in Berlin is not much different. It is located, very much hidden, in one of the grimmest Berlin districts, albeit in its high street in an old sculpture studio. But it is a charming home, cramped but somewhat congenial. It has space for a small part of the collection, an exhibition gallery for special purposes, and, of course, studio stages (for details see below).

The museum, started off by Nikolaus Hein as a mobile puppet theatre museum in 1986, has had a permanent home since 1994 and now receives some official support from the district council.

Maybe its charm is created by the privacy of the small museum. Certainly to come across the museum at this far end of Berlin is a pleasure.

Concept of the Berlin Puppet Theatre Museum

[excerpted from the Museum's (German-only) website]

The Puppet Theatre Museum is a museum for children and adults. It aims to provide comprehensive information on the history of the theatre, display past forms of puppetry and, in so doing, awaken interest in the puppet/figure* theatre today.

Other themes are presented in exhibitions that change each year. There are daily tours of the exhibition for children and adults – these tours are aimed at specific target groups – as well as alternating puppet theatre performances, story-telling sessions, readings, and workshops for children and adults which complete the exhibition. Young visitors are given an insight into the museum and theatre experience as well as the fairy-story culture of various nations.

In addition to the regular puppet theatre performances and story-telling sessions, we have five new events in the programme, that are rotated at regular intervals:

1. The monthly children's afternoon entitled "The Fairy Tale, Playground of the Imagination."
2. A Glimpse Behind the Scenes.
3 Lamplight Tour for visitors with strong nerves, aged eight and up.
4 The Puppet Theatre Museum offers regular puppet-making and puppetry workshops for different target groups, often in conjunction with the VHS Neukölln [Volkshochschule = Adult Education Centre].
5. The museum also organizes children's birthday parties.

After many years of preparation the PTM Berlin was founded in 1986 by Nikolaus Hein, initially as the Mobile Puppet Theatre Berlin.

Work on assembling the collection began in 1970. The collection contains puppets of all types from the various cultural areas of Europe, Africa, and Asia, sometimes from very important stages and puppetmakers. The stock of figures contains hand puppets, rod puppets, marionettes, shadow figures, transformation figures, two-dimensional puppets, and special trick figures. The puppet theatre history of Berlin is a focal point of the collection. An archive has been organized in addition to the stock of figures. It comprises specialist literature, documents, photos, posters, and performance texts as well as engravings, paintings, and graphics on this theme over four centuries. The collection contains complete stage sets (stages, scenery, and scripts). The PTM has had its permanent base at Karl-Marx-Strasse 135 in Berlin/Neukoelln since 21 March 1995. Transport: U7 [underground railway] (Karl-Marx-Str., exit Neuköllner Oper).

Our current exhibitions:

The PTM has two exhibitions on at the moment.

1. Puppet theatre, playground of the imagination (till 31 August 2000). This exhibition gives an insight into the varied phenomenon of the puppet theatre. Figures from Europe and Asia of the most varied types are displayed.
2. Puppets for the stage, 40 years of the Steinmann Literary Figure Theatre (till 30 April 2000). This exhibition offers an overview of the artistic work of Benita and Peter Steinmann 1959-1999.

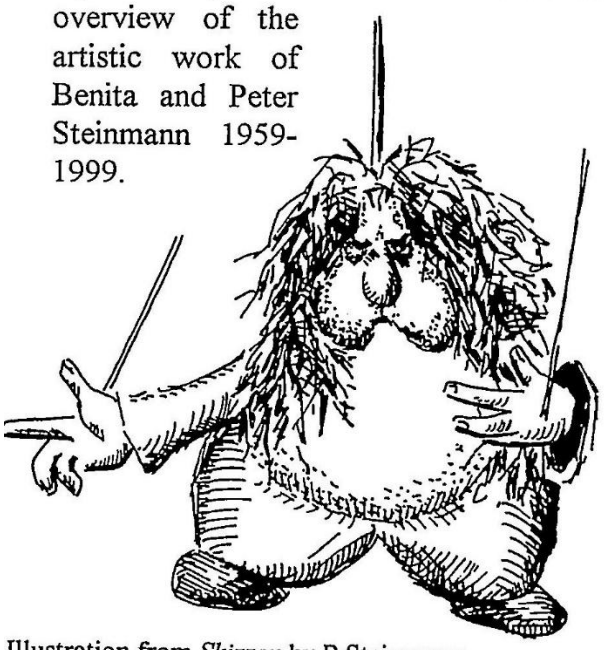


Illustration from *Skizzen* by P Steinmann

The PTM has published an excellent, very reasonably priced folder of colour and black and white puppet prints, from which our cover illustration is taken.

*There is, by the way, a recent case in Germany whereby an argument over the use of Figurentheater versus Puppentheater ended in a director's resignation.

After appending this note, I had the following point of view, taken from *The Old Art of Puppetry in the New World Order* (1993), by Peter Schumann, brought to my attention:

"In the meantime our German puppet colleagues have come up with an ingenious solution to the social-status-problem of puppetry by re-baptising it: *Figurentheater* (theater of objects) – so that nobody will find them guilty of complicity with Kaspar, Punch or Petrushka. It's a sad fact but modern puppeteers strive to be part of the respectable legitimate theater establishment. They want to get away from the obvious childishness, freshness, disrespectfulness and politics and away from the fresh air or the poisonous air of the streets, where such mixtures of blatant truths and outright blasphemy rightly belong."

Museum Shake-up

The Musée des arts et traditions populaires (see page 22) is to move from the Bois de Boulogne to Marseilles 2006/2007. This museum, which has long suffered from poor attendance figures (60,000 a year), will also be changing its identity, assuming a European rather than purely national perspective. It has a wonderful collection of French puppets, which disappeared from the basement display cases a few years ago in a vain attempt by curators to fill the space with more crowd-pulling exhibits. It is not clear what will happen to them (space will still be a problem at Fort Saint-Jean). The museum's attractive little ethnographic guide to the puppets, *Marionnettes leur manipulation leur théâtre,* is out of print but still available. More information can be found in *Le Monde* (16 12 99) or, if you want a more general discussion of the concept of "museums of Europe" ("une Europe des esprits") see the same newspaper (28/29 11 99).

Romeo e Giulietta by Teatro Carretto of Tuscany

Penny Francis

In November Riverside Studios in London presented Teatro Carretto's *Romeo e Giulietta*, to the music of Bellini, as part of the Italian festival taking place all over the capital. Some readers may have seen the same company's *Snow White* at Battersea Arts Centre a few years ago, which was unusual enough to make us want to see more of that company's work. *Romeo e Giulietta* could not have been more different in staging, but the same mind at work could be discerned – in the similar fascination with differences in scale, the use of the mask, and the grotesque interpretation of the characters surrounding the central lovers.

I have rarely seen rod puppets worked from below in slots cut into the stage floor, although the history of puppetry refers to them in use in several countries, including an opera company in Chicago. Here the principal stage consisted of nine square platforms, perhaps four feet high, pressed together, with the slots between them used as channels for the puppets, which were themselves about a metre high. Romeo and Juliet were almost the only puppets – hieratic, slow, graceful characters, the pretty playthings of fate. Everyone else was a masked human, most presented as dwarfish creatures in billowing skirts or trousers. The performers were in fact asked to play these roles on their haunches, and to move the puppets from a crouching position underneath the platforms. I cannot imagine that outside a circus troupe you could find a company with more strength in their thigh muscles!

The text was heavily cut, and was read from the sides of the stage by actors trained to recite in a sort of chant – neither song nor speech. There is precedent for that too – but nowadays its effect is soporific, and the monotony largely buries the meaning of the verse.

In the end, after the death of the lovers, the platforms were rolled to the wings and Romeo and Juliet appeared as human beings on a catafalque, which advanced slowly towards the spectators. They were no longer fate's puppets. It was a very beautiful ending. In fact the whole production was aesthetically pleasing – artificially so. The costumes were rich, and the scenography inventive, if sometimes clumsy. The rod puppet Juliet was able to kneel, pray, incline her head, and gesture with her arms – she had a complicated set of mechanisms. Romeo was simpler.

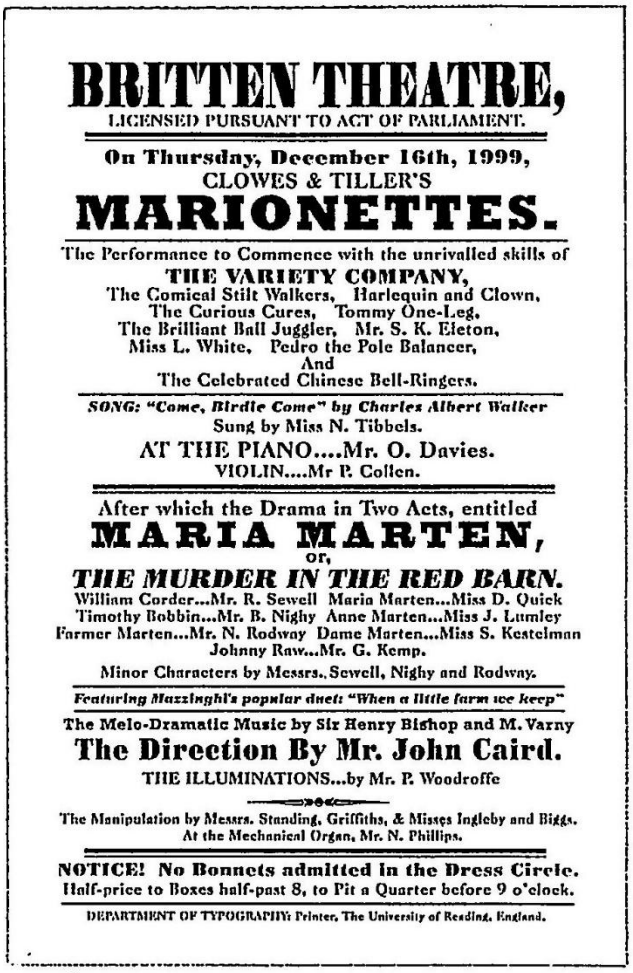
A memorable moment came at the end of the Friar Lawrence scene: the lovers and the priest were shown outside his cell as tiny versions of their previous selves. Suddenly our focus was taken by a rising curtain at the rear of the stage which slowly revealed, from foot to head, a gigantesque form overshadowing and threatening them. It was a fearsome few seconds before we realised that the giant was simply a human actor. The sudden contrast made for a genuine *coup de théâtre.*

Graziano Gregori was responsible for the design, and Maria Grazia Cipriani for the adaptation and direction. The book of the show is a pleasant reminder of its rich images.

See also Lyn Gardner's review in *The Guardian* (05 11 99).

Tiller Girls and Boys Strut Their Stuff – Swinging Time Had By All

A condition of the Theatre Museum's purchase of 35 Tiller-Clowes figures – the last troupe of working Victorian marionettes – from Hilary Phillips was that they would perform at least once a year. In December they performed a fund-raising evening, opening with half an hour of variety turns followed by *Maria Marten, or Murder in the Red Barn!* at the Royal College of Music in London with a stellar cast of Joanna Lumley, Sara Kestleman, Diana Quick, Bill Nighy, Norman Rodway, Gary Kemp and Simon



BRITTEN THEATRE,

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On Thursday, December 16th, 1999,
CLOWES & TILLER'S

MARIONETTES.

The Performance to Commence with the unrivalled skills of
THE VARIETY COMPANY,
The Comical Stilt Walkers, Harlequin and Clown,
The Curious Cures, Tommy One-Leg,
The Brilliant Ball Juggler, Mr. S. K. Eleton,
Miss L. White, Pedro the Pole Balancer,
And
The Celebrated Chinese Bell-Ringers.

SONG: "Come, Birdie Come" by Charles Albert Walker
Sung by Miss N. Tibbels.
AT THE PIANO....Mr. O. Davies.
VIOLIN....Mr P. Collen.

After which the Drama in Two Acts, entitled
MARIA MARTEN,
or,
THE MURDER IN THE RED BARN.
William Corder...Mr. R. Sewell Maria Marten...Miss D. Quick
Timothy Bobbin...Mr. B. Nighy Anne Marten...Miss J. Lumley
Farmer Marten...Mr. N. Rodway Dame Marten...Miss S. Kestelman
Johnny Raw...Mr. G. Kemp.
Minor Characters by Messrs. Sewell, Nighy and Rodway.

Featuring Mazzinghi's popular duet: "When a little farm we keep"
The Melo-Dramatic Music by Sir Henry Bishop and M. Varny
The Direction By Mr. John Caird.
THE ILLUMINATIONS...by Mr. P. Woodroffe

The Manipulation by Messrs. Standing, Griffiths, & Misses Ingleby and Biggs.
At the Mechanical Organ, Mr. N. Phillips.

NOTICE! No Bonnets admitted in the Dress Circle.
Half-price to Boxes half-past 8, to Pit a Quarter before 9 o'clock.

DEPARTMENT OF TYPOGRAPHY: Printer, The University of Reading, England.

Day, directed by John Caird with piano accompaniment researched and played by Oliver Davis, and an equally elevated ticket price – £50. (The "voices" greatly took to their mute fellow-professionals: Diana Quick, in particular, I am told, expressing a wish to work with the puppets again). I saw the melodrama later, at the Theatre Museum, on Sunday 23 January. The actors may have been more "down to earth," consonant with the normal entrance price to the museum that secured you a seat, but were as much into the swing of things as the manipulators, with a script – and this is a compliment – as wooden as the 30" marionettes, to the accompaniment of period music on the piano, again played by Oliver Davis.

BBC I's morning programme had a slot devoted to the Tiller-Clowes on 21 January. Theatre Museum Curator Catherine Haill and puppeteers Ken Standing and Anna Ingleby were in attendance, and it was good to see the marionettes being put through their paces on TV. The only problem was the interviewer – an idiot.

A fine colour photograph of the Tiller-Clowes figures by Eddie Mulholland appeared in *The Telegraph* (13 12 99) and is available from the newspaper's Photo Sales on 0171 538 7036 (10×8 costs £12.50).

The next *Bulletin* will carry more detailed coverage of the Tiller-Clowes and also look at the controversial issue of (performing) objects and museums.

"Wooden hearts brought to life"

Under that heading, Arkady Ostrovsky interviews the marionettist Rezo Gabriadze in his home town of Tbilisi in a half-page piece in the *Financial Times* on New Year's Day. "He has created a marionette theatre which is unlike any other in the world." – Ostrovsky writes, a touch hyperbolically (he was described to me as a "fan" by someone travelling with the company in Paris, on that leg of the four-month tour of France and Switzerland of the acclaimed *The Battle of Stalingrad*). "It is not a theatre for children, and the puppets do not speak with silly voices. It is the theatre of one author – Gabriadze – who writes the script, makes the marionettes and directs them." The article is good on Gabriadze's background: "I was born in Kutaisi in western Georgia which adjoins ancient Greece. I grew up in a theatrical yard. Apart from us and doctor Gelevani, everyone else in the yard acted in a theatre. Schiller's Robbers and Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra were as common a part of my childhood as a sand-box for other children. Our neighbours forbade me to go to the theatre, because, apparently, I laughed too loud, especially in tragic moments."

There is no time for a review here, but La *Bataille de Stalingrad*, subtitled *Requiem*, is undoubtedly a powerful piece, which has been very well received at festivals, like Avignon, over several years, and was loudly applauded on the February night I saw it by the near-capacity audience at the Théâtre de

la Ville, just six stops down from the metro station which still commemorates that monumental clash of arms. My major reservation would be to do with the emotionality. How else could it be represented – one might well ask – given such colossal slaughter and suffering of soldiers, civilians, and animals, which latter also evoke Gabriadze's sympathy? I may be too "English."

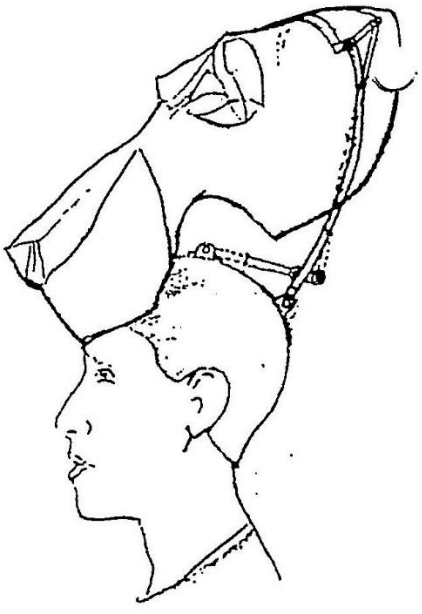
On a purely practical note, there is quite a lot of language in the play (and absolutely nothing wrong with that) – Russian rather than Georgian, with a workmanlike French translation effectively channelled from "the gods" – but if you have neither of those languages, you would benefit from reading the plot summary first. (Further information from us, as is quite often the case, is available on request.)

Theatre without Words

Faulty Optic dusted off *Dustlouse* for the London Mime Festival in January and it was still up to snuff. Dominic Cavendish, *The Independent*, 19 01 00: "If anyone still needs persuading that puppetry can be for grown-ups.... It's a nightmarishly beautiful work that has all the invention of a Wallace and Gromit escapade with none of the cuteness"; Lyn Gardner, *The Guardian*, 20 01 00, "Faulty Optic is one of British theatre's best-kept secrets." Other performances included Stephen Mottram's *In Suspension*: "This series of six short pieces.... creates tiny complete worlds full of suspense, surprise and sometimes foreboding.... What's interesting about the performance is the way it creates a recognisably human world using marionettes that are often as blank as dummies. Somewhere in the space between the action and the music, it is the audience's own imaginative response that brings this strange, eerie world fully and gloriously alive" – LG, *The Guardian*, 18 01 00. A preview/overview of the festival is supplied by Cavendish in *The Indy*, 05 01 00.

Lionized

Apart from *The Guardian*, which disliked "its Disneyfied verbal banality," and *The Observer*, which found it lacked "an emotional or intellectual core," the show received high praise from the press: *The Express* thought the staging like "being in the middle of some fabulous safari," *The Indy* opined it was a "Hamlet with fur," which puts "the 'best' in bestiary," while *The Independent on Sunday* toasted: "Long live the king." Among the more informative and longish articles on the concept of and background to *The Lion King* see *The Guardian*, 18 10 99, and *The Observer*, 03 10 99. Try to see the South Bank Show on the preparation for the London opening if it is repeated. A reminder that *The Drama Review*, Fall 1999, contains a 20-page interview with Taymor conducted by Richard Schechner titled "Julie Taymor: From Jacques Lecoq to *The Lion King*." "With her Broadway smash hit The Lion King, Taymor became one of America's most popular puppeteers. Her work is grounded in Indonesia, mime training with Jacques Lecoq, and her own decades-long experiments. In this interview, Taymor discusses the overall trajectory of her stage and film work." (The French Institute, London, screened *Les Deux Voyages de Jacques Lecoq* on 29 January. Will try to determine further availability.)



Scar's mask in normal raised position. Sketch from *The Lion King Pride Rock on Broadway* by J. Taymor

Festivals

Bath Puppet Festival 21-26 April

Venue the Ustinov Studio at the Theatre Royal. The programme includes: the UK premiere of *Molière* by Stuffed Puppet Co from the Netherlands; "prior to world premiere" *Bambi – The Wilderness Years* by Green Ginger; *Tristan and Isolde* by Puppetcraft; *Rose Blanche* by Box Clever and Obelon Art & Puppetry, and many others. Telephone 01225 448844 for details.

International Puppet Theatre Festival of Nativity Plays, 8-12 January 2001, Lutsk, Ukraine

Lutsk, which held its first festival in 1993, intends to organize a festival of nativity and related shows, an exhibition of documents concerning the tradition in particular countries, and a scientific session on the role of the nativity tradition in European culture. The festival's scientific adviser, by the way, is Professor Henryk Jurkowski. Lutsk is unable to offer performers a fee but will provide accommodation, pocket money, and free entrance to all the shows and other events and also assist by sending letters to funding bodies on your behalf. An application form which also seeks to elicit information about the nativity tradition in individual countries, collections, local experts etc, is available from us or by writing direct to:

Міжнародний фестиваль театрів ляльок "Різдвяна містерія"

International Puppet Theater Festival of Nativity Plays
Director Danilo Poshtaruk
Kryvyi Wal,
18 263035 Lutsk
Ukraine tel/fax 380 3322 23163

Liège International Puppet Festival 10-22 March 2000

Le Printemps de la Marionnette au Pays de Liège has a very good line-up. In addition to 21 home representatives, there will be 12 foreign participants, including Le Théâtre Pas Sage (France), Naivní divadlo Liberec (Czech Republic), Pupi di Stac (Italy), Dan Bishop (England), Nowa Akademia (Poland), Pannalal's Puppets (Switzerland), Figurentheater Heinrich Heimlich (Germany), Los Titiriteros de Binéfar (Spain)....

For further details contact Théâtre Royal Ancien Impérial, Musée Tchantchès, 56 Rue Surlet, 4020 Liège, Belgium; tel 04/342 75 75.

I learn from the February issue of our Belgian UNIMA twins' newsletter, *D'un castelet à l'autre*, that our friend Georges Vetters, the president of the *section francophone*, presents a programme in Walloon on RTBf Liège each Friday and twice a month invites a representative of a puppet theatre of the region to his sounding board. Belgian's Hubert Roman, whom some of us know, will be running for UNIMA Secretary-General when Jacques Félix steps down at Magdeburg.

The Great Midlands Millennium Puppet Party.

For details of the Punch and Judy Jamboree and International Slapstick Symposium taking place at Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, Saturday 13 and 14 May, with satellite events elsewhere in the Midlands, contact PuppetLink on 01299 266 634 www.puppetlink.co.uk Lots of great British

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performers (Hand to Mouth with *Piggery Jokery!* No Strings Theatre with *Robin Hood*, and lots of top P&J Profs) plus Compagnia degli Sbuffi from Italy with Pulcinella, Prof. Woodhead and Madame Abelli from Sweden with Kasper, special guest Baul Singer from Bengal, Company Maskaras from Hungary with Vitéz Lázsló, and Piccolo Puppet Players from California with Punch USA. There is an International Slapstick Symposium, designed to keep the Punch and Judy tradition refreshed and invigorated, plus free P&J skills workshops: swazzling (Glyn Edwards), costume making (Brian and Alison Davey), Punch and the web (Chris Somerville), devising routines (Martin Bridle), and creating character voices (Dan Bishop). The above, plus a lot more, is presented in association with the Punch and Judy College of Professors. And 99% of events are free, courtesy of the wonderfully named Millennium Festival Large Amount Award (London has its Dome, the West Midlands....)

Events

The Guild will be celebrating its 75th at the Puppet Centre, London, with an evening of toy theatre performed by George Speaight, Peter Baldwin, and Peter Peasgood on Tuesday 25 April.

Island Hopping – Javanese & Balinese Gamelan. The South Bank Gamelan Players are joined by top dancers from Central Java and Bali at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, 7.45 pm, Thursday 27 April. Ring (020) 7960 4242.

Puppetry One's Meat and Drink

Ever responsive to the opportunity to combine puppetry with eating and drinking, I was pleased to hear that a new restaurant in Islington will shortly be hosting Indigo Moon in its Dinner-Concert series. Anna Ingleby (puppeteer)and Helen Evans (sitar player) will be performing in the restaurant's gallery on 3rd April, introducing the first programme of non-European music and the only event featuring puppetry in the present series. Helen has created her own style of music based around Rajasthani folk song and dance music, specially designed for the accompaniment of puppetry, and on this occasion will be performing on sitar and Indonesian percussion instruments while Anna will be demonstrating Indian string and Indonesian rod puppets.

Indigo Moon appear as the third in the Spring Series at ARTtoZEN which encompasses the arts of four centuries and three continents. The events take place on the first Monday of each month at 7.30 pm in the gallery above the restaurant. On arrival the guests are offered a drink and invited to order food. They then relax and enjoy the performance while their meal is prepared. Guests have the opportunity to meet and talk to performers over dinner, in a more relaxed atmosphere than concert or theatre performances usually afford.

For further information or to be added to the ARTtoZEN mailing list, please ring Rachel Stott on 0171 704 0147. Tickets for the Dinner Concerts (which include a 3-course meal) are £15. To book tickets please ring John Hewett at ARTtoZEN on 0171 226 5300, email Arttozen@hotmail.com or send a cheque to ARTtoZEN, 27 Upper St, London N1.

Rise Phoenix Newzletter

The January issue describes the two-month-long Big Friendly Giant Tour of Macedonian refugee camps and Kosova by five different groups of artists, which also included Puppet Production & the Boot Puppets from Hastings. A documentary shot by Rise Phoenix in the camps is forthcoming. For more information on all the company's activities at home and abroad or if you wish to make a contribution to their coffers (there is also an auction/party fund-raiser at Saatchi and Saatchi, Charlotte St, in May), they are to be found at Block C, Imperial Works, Perren St, London NW5 ED; (0171) 4822679, website:

www.risephoenix.ffnet.co.uk

Caricature Assassination

Daumier

The fine Chardin exhibition held at the Grand Palais will soon arrive at the Royal Academy. It is a shame, though, that the Daumier retrospective which that imperial Parisian building housed at the same time will not – it has gone to Ottawa. You may, like me, have known him *just* as a caricaturist (I had long admired a puppet political cartoon of his – not the one on the front cover, as it happens), with a long association, in particular, with the publication *Charivari*, but this exhibition enabled you to see the full panoply of his output: sculpture, lithographs, paintings, drawings. There was a whole series of oil paintings of the theatre, the refined colour and capturing of light of *Crispin et Scapin* being particularly celebrated; very affecting drawings and watercolours of travelling performers (*Les Saltimbanques*), often suffused with a sense of desolation and solitude; and a preoccupation with Don Quixote, which produced 29 paintings and 41 drawings. Tom Lubbock (*The Independent*, 02 11 99) and Martin Gayford (*The Daily Telegraph*, 10 11 99) reviewed the show, the latter using one of Daumier's *Croquis dramatiques*, a series of lithographs, as illustration.

The New York Review of Books (Vol XLVII, No 3, 24 02 00) contains a three-page review of the exhibition, by the poet James Fenton, in which he cites an interesting name – for puppeteers – in the "transmission belt" of art: "At the same time as the lithograph was being rescued for the service of art, favourite Daumier themes were taken up and given new life. The saltimbanques had been taken over by Picasso, who had been introduced to Daumier's work by Alfred Jarry."

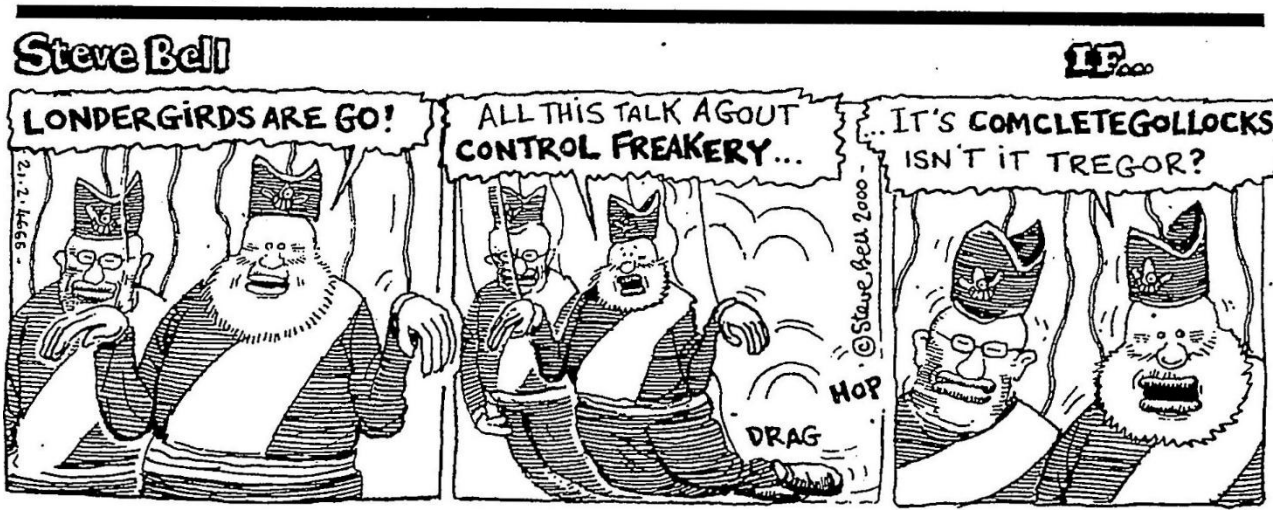
In the (Westminster) land of the witless the half-wit is king

According to an article on political humour (*The Independent* 20 11 99), "William Hague has got the political joke down to a fine art." Asked to comment on this dubious premise, Comedian Phil Jupitus says: "William Hague's material isn't very good. Perhaps he needs to work on a puppet act like Mr Garrison in *South Park*. I'd like to see him with a sock side-kick." Sock it to them, Willy!

Steve Bell began a series of *If...* cartoons in *The Guardian* (the week of 21 February) featuring that undynamic duo bidding for the London mayoralty – Captain Dobbo and "Tregor" – as marionettes.

The Aeolian Charms of Semar?

The misshapen clown Semar has been mentioned several times in this publication (figuring even on the cover of No 100). He is, after all, a very important figure in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. However, albeit a demigod, "he often farts his way through much of the night-long drama of the *wayang* play," as Tim Behrend puts it in an article in *Indonesia and the Malay World* (Vol 27, No 79, Nov 1999), in which he explores the use to which Semar's flatulent facility is put in a piece by globetrotting Heri Dono ("one of Indonesia's foremost installation artists"). To be honest, I do not



find this audience-participatory piece of *pétomanie* interesting, and Dono is not a *dhalang* in any traditional sense, though he has used puppets before, except as an attempt to incorporate tradition in something new. Dono, again according to Behrend, is particularly "intrigued" by the French artist Orlan, who undergoes surgery for "art" (my italics), which is hardly a recommendation in my book. Nevertheless, the article, with the numbing title "The Millennial Esc(h)atology of Heri Dono: 'Semar Farts' First in Auckland, New Zealand" does carry incidental information about Semar which may be of interest of readers and I should be happy to pass on a photocopy of the article from what is a subscription publication on request. I learned for example that the description Super Semar – Soeharto very much identified himself with the figure – derived from the Indonesians' fascination with word play: **su**rat **per**intah **se**belas **mar**et, which stands for Government Order of 11th March, the declaration by which Soeharto assumed power on 11 March, 1966. The final paragraph says "The second trial [of the performance installation] will be in England near the Millennium Dome, in August...." Did anyone tell Yves Gerbeau before he crossed the Channel? You at least, dear readers, have been warned of the semidivine wind that will be blowing down the Thames.

It is not, of course, that such phenomena are alien to us. The annual afflatus of panto, the regular *Carry On* films on TV, *Blazing Saddles*, Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmonson's *Bottom*, and, most recently of all, the farting Swelter (Richard Griffiths) in *Gormenghast* are current examples of an interest in bodily functions, but in the two-part series *Best of Enemies*, the urbane Kenneth Baker, former Home Secretary and ardent cartoon-collector, showed how the English have depicted the French and Germans and vice versa, sometimes cruelly and mostly stereotypically, over the centuries (BBC 2, 05 01 00, 12 01 00). Lord Baker is a self-confessed "bit of a Francophile," but Hogarth hated the Frogs, and Gillray did not spare the sausage-eating Germans. And the lower half of the body politic was not neglected by the satirists' pen – ventosity, defecation, and enemas being part of their stock in trade.

Baker has just lent Gerald Scarfe's famous cartoon of a Thatcher "handbagging" to an exhibition at the Cartoon Gallery.

Follow-Ups

As if in response to the ignorance I expressed in the last issue of the *Bulletin* (p 28) regarding the Javanese form known as *wayang ukur* ("measured wayang") Helen Evans wrote a three-page article about Pak Sukasman in November's *Seleh Notes*. Pak Sukasman invented this form in 1994 and has written extensively on it. It involves three *dhalang*, a distinctive use of lights, short dance interludes which form an integral part of the action, specially composed gamelan music, adapted stories, specially shaped puppets (anatomically exaggerated features), and so forth, but far better read the article in question. The same issue contains a review by Sarah Bilby of last August's Jakarta *wayang* festival. *Seleh* is obtainable from Sheila Cude at Flat 3, 69 Hillfield Avenue, London N8 7DS; web site – www.palay.ndirect.co.uk/seleh.notes

Housekeeping

Deadline for the *Newsletter* is 1 April, deadline for the *Bulletin* is 15 May (the earlier date is dictated by Magdeburg).

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